

THE
S I C I L I A N.

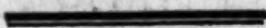
A NOVEL.

. IN FOUR VOLUMES.



BY

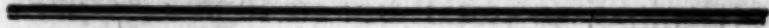
THE AUTHOR OF THE MYSTERIOUS WIFE.



The parent's partial fondness for a child,
An only child, can surely be no crime !
No: Care's a father's right ;—a pleasing right,
In which he labours with a home-felt joy.

SHIRLEY.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva-Press,
FOR WILLIAM LANE, LEADENHALL-STREET.

1798.



THE

SILF A N.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

—

BY

THE AUTHOR OF THE MYSTERIOUS WILL.

—

The parent's partial fondness for a child,
An only child, can hardly be so cruel!
No: Care's a father's right; — of doing right,
In which he labours with a parent's joy.

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SICILIAN.

CHAP. I.

IN the commencement of the month of March 1792, when the French nobility of every denomination, through various motives, were emigrating from their native country, and seeking a refuge in the neighbouring kingdoms and states, or joining the standard then erected by their unfortunate Princes at Coblentz, an English gentleman of the name of Neville, upon his road to Ostend, and return from what is generally called the Grand Tour, stopped to breakfast

at Halle, a dismantled town of Hainault in the Austrian Netherlands, three leagues from Bruffels, and rendered famous from a celebrated image of the Virgin Mary in the cathedral or church of Notre Dame, to whose shrine most travellers paid a visit, either out of curiosity or devotion ; but as pilgrimages were going out of fashion, the former motive was grown by far the most prevalent, though at the above-mentioned period the Holy Lady retained all her honours ; and if the chapel allotted her could not vie in point of magnificence with the Sancta Casa * at Loretto, still it abounded in various rich gifts, and was hung round with pictures representing the miraculous escapes of those votaries who recommended themselves to her protection in the hour of danger. Mr. Neville would most likely have been among the few who pass through this town without seeing the Madona, if he had not been informed, when he had finished his meal, there would not be any horses at home within an hour

* Holy House.

or



or more, owing to the amazing influx of emigrants passing to and fro. Knowing it would be useless to attempt to remonstrate, and having stood at a window till he was tired of the sight of a white cockade, the badge by which the French were distinguished, he put on his great coat, as the weather was particularly cold for the season, and sallied forth to take a view of this image he had before heard mentioned. He had no occasion to ask his way to the church, as it nearly joined the Inn; he therefore walked in without ceremony, and rambled about for some time, looking at the pictures, &c. when he was addressed by the sexton, who kept the key of the chapel which contained the Holy Lady, and who asked Mr. Neville if he would not chuse to pay her a visit? He readily consented, and was listening to a very prolix explanation of the various miracles the pictures already mentioned were meant to commemorate, when a gentleman between five and six-and-twenty, leading a fine little boy about five years old, each

ressed rather in the English stile, entered the chapel, putting a momentary stop to the old man's volubility, as he advanced to welcome his new guests, and then began his story afresh, intreating Mr. Neville to attend once more, and he should soon get to where he had left off.

That gentleman, who had hitherto merely listened to his improbable tales with some apparent degree of attention, from not wishing to hurt the poor fellow's feelings, was by no means interested in his recapitulation; therefore attended much more to the strangers than the orator, as he was particularly struck with the fine manly figure of the gentleman, whose animated countenance bespoke him by no means deficient in point of understanding; and Mr. Neville having set him down in his own mind for a countryman, rather wondered at the serious demeanour he preserved during recitals which had often tempted him to smile, and more than once to laugh. The little boy bore so strong a resemblance to his conductor, Mr. Neville easily

easily guessed they were father and son : the child was much the most curious of the two, as he made the sexton repeat some of his stories, made several remarks, and asked many shrewd questions, to the great amusement of Mr. Neville ; but, as he spoke excellent French, he began to think he had been mistaken in his first conjectures, and to fear they were French fugitives, driven perhaps through their noble origin, from their household gods, as there was a sort of native dignity in the gentleman's manner which led him to suppose he was a man of some rank.

Mr. Neville had often heard it observed, that the inhabitants of the Low Countries, or Netherlands, were the most bigoted, superstitious set of people in Europe, and thought the remark verified in this old Flemish sexton ; for whenever the child expressed any doubts as to the authenticity of the miracles he was descanting upon, the old fellow had hard work to keep his temper. His anger highly diverted Mr. Neville ; and

even the stranger, he perceived, had now and then some difficulty to preserve his gravity, though from various remarks he had made, he guessed he was a Catholic, and consequently placed more faith in miracles than he did. A mere silent bow had hitherto passed between them; but the old man having come to the place where the stranger had interrupted his story, again desired Mr. Neville to listen, and with vast emphasis, and in a very nasal tone, continued to trumpet forth the Virgin's praises: but before he had enumerated half the surprising deeds she had performed, the child exclaimed, "Pray, papa, how many Virgin Mary's are there?" This question quite overset Neville's gravity; and the stranger, without entering into a discussion upon the subject, joined him in a very hearty laugh, which hurt the poor old man to such a degree, he hurried over the rest of his miracles, and was not sorry when such profane wretches, who he presumed were heretics, were without side the grate of the holy chapel; and having
received

received what each party chose to bestow upon him, he hastened out of the church, fearful that the pillars would give way, and the roof fall in to crush these unbelievers.

As Mr. Neville had been the first to give way to his mirth, he made his excuses to the stranger, adding, "I think it would be excusable in the most rigid Catholic not to give credit to such absurd fabrications."

"Else I should be very deserving of censure, Sir," said the stranger. "Yet, though I profess that religion, I do not place implicit faith in the doctrine of miracles."

This speech prevented Mr. Neville from pursuing the subject. He turned the discourse, which had hitherto passed in French, upon some of the pictures in the choir; and then reverted to the weather, till the little boy said, "I hope we shall get some horses soon, papa." This remark convinced Mr. Neville they were both detained from the same cause.

Having seen every thing the cathedral afforded, they walked out of it together, and, by mutual consent, turned into what appeared to be the principal street, and seldom proceeded more than three steps at a time without meeting parties of emigrants, some raving at being detained, others abusing the inhabitants of Halle, who they affirmed were the most imposing set of wretches under the sun. This seemed a general complaint; and they appeared as eager in their rage to cut off heads by dozens, as the leaders of their revolution had been, whose conduct they were so loudly and so justly condemning.

“What is your opinion of those unfortunate people, Sir?” said the stranger to Mr. Neville.

“That they are very much to be pitied, Sir,” “though I think many of them had much better have staid in France; as I have been assured, by people whose authority was unquestionable, that the greater number of them were not of sufficient

sufficient consequence to have excited the attention of the democrats: but it is fashionable to emigrate, and every *chevalier* wishes to be thought a nobleman of the first rank."

Mr. Neville had said rather more than he at first intended, as he still suspected his new acquaintance was a native of France. The stranger smiled, and said in very good English, "Your remarks are just, Sir. I think every kingdom in Europe, your happy island excepted, is overrun with *petite Noblesse*, to use a French phrase. I believe I am addressing an Englishman?"

Mr. Neville answered in the affirmative in his own language, more puzzled than ever to guess what countryman his companion was, since it evidently appeared he was neither a Frenchman nor a Briton. While he was revolving the matter in his mind, the stranger said, "I am afraid this extraordinary revolution will even put a stop to your countrymen's travels, Sir."

"Then it may be of essential service to Great Britain, Sir," said Neville; "for I

have frequently heard it remarked, we young men return with more follies and vices than we took abroad with us, and very few of us reap any great benefit from our Tour."

"Your, in some respects, just *critique*, Sir," said the stranger, "convinces me you set out with a determination not to increase the class you are condemning; pray have you visited Italy?"

"I have been at Rome, Sir, and was sorry it was not in my power to extend my tour to Naples, as that city and its environs contain many things worthy the notice of curious travellers. You have possibly had the advantage I was forced to relinquish?"

"I am a Sicilian by birth, Sir," said the stranger, "and in general reside at Naples."

"I really thought you were my countryman," said Neville; for I never yet heard a foreigner speak our language with equal ease and fluency; you must have been taught it early in life, and by a Briton, I should presume?"

The stranger smiled. "I have been frequently taken for an Englishman; but I was born at Palermo, educated in Germany, and was for some years in the service of his Imperial Majesty; I am now in that of the King of Naples; therefore you perceive I have been a traveller like yourself, though I have never yet been in England, but am now upon my road thither, to visit a nobleman, with whom chance brought me acquainted about three years since, Lord Fortrose; perhaps you are acquainted with him?"

Neville, unconscious of what he did at the moment, made a sudden stop, and catching hold of the stranger's arm, looked him anxiously in the face, while he exclaimed, "I have the honour of addressing the Duke de Ferrara?" The stranger, rather astonished at his companion's behaviour, confirmed his conjecture; and Neville thus proceeded:—"I have long been acquainted with your Grace by reputation; and must intreat you would allow me to introduce myself to your notice, as the only son of

Lord Fortrose, Francis Neville, whom your Grace has, no doubt, heard mentioned as a very wild fellow; but believe me I am as sensible as he can be of the obligations your Grace has laid us both under."

The Duke caught Neville's hand before he had ceased speaking; and with evident marks of joy and surprise said, "No compliments I entreat between old acquaintance. I am excessively happy we have met thus *apropos*; though I really can hardly forgive you for having left Italy without paying me a visit: had I known when you were at Rome, I should certainly have come in search of you."

"Positively, your Grace, my father was fearful your known hospitality might have induced you to insist upon my becoming your guest; and, from finding me a troublesome inmate himself, I presume, did not chuse to afford me an opportunity of paying my respects to you at Naples."

"For which I really feel very much inclined to quarrel with his Lordship," said the

Duke;

Duke; "but remember, Mr. Neville, I shall insist upon your returning my visit, or I declare I won't pursue my journey, much as I long to visit England. But are you alone? (Neville answered in the affirmative). "Then you must do me the favour to accept the vacant corner in my carriage; for I shall really feel myself very awkward on the other side of the water;—though I am a tolerable proficient in your language, I am totally unacquainted with your manners and customs; but under your protection I shall make my *entrée* into Great Britain without fear."

"It gives me infinite pleasure, Sir," said Neville, "even to fancy I can be of the slightest use to you. I shall very willingly abandon my cabriolet to my servant. I have been recalled rather sooner than my father at first intended, as he wished me to participate in the pleasure he promises himself from your visit. This is the sweet little fellow I have so often heard him mention? and have heard all his prognostics verified, to the scandal of the poor old sexton."

Here

The

The little fellow did not comprehend what Mr. Neville alluded to, nor did his Grace wish he should, as he was particularly careful not to give the child room to suppose he possessed more sense and wit than generally fell to the share of little folks of his age. The Duke, therefore, without noticing the indirect compliment Neville paid his son, said, "If Lord Fortrose had not particularly expressed his wishes to see his young friend, as he kindly called Alfred, I should not have made him the companion of my journey, though I must acknowledge I should not have enjoyed the thoughts of leaving him behind me, therefore was very happy to avail myself of his Lordship's invitation."

"I am convinced my father would have been very much disappointed if you had not complied with his request. I hope you left your other son well?"

"Perfectly so, my dear Sir, under the care of a female relation, whose affection for him almost equals my own, and with whom he has constantly resided since the death of his mother."

Here

Here their conversation was interrupted by the approach of the Duke's courier, a Swiss, who told his master of some returned horses, and that the carriages would be ready in a few minutes :—they therefore walked towards the inn ; and as soon as they entered the yard, the landlord, who was parading backwards and forwards, told Mr. Neville he should be next served, but the Duke's courier had preceded him into Halle, adding, " I would give any money just now for either horses or carriages."—" I will sell you mine," said Neville, " since you have not got horses to draw it any farther."—" Only fix your price, Sir," said the landlord, and I am your man." In five minutes the bargain was struck ; the baggage was shifted to the Duke's coach which followed him with servants ; and in five more the gentlemen and little Alfred got into a Postchaise, and pursued their journey to Ostend.

CHAP. II.

THE travellers had each left Brussels in the morning, with an intention of reaching Tournay to sleep, where they had been informed they should meet with excellent accommodations; but owing to the delay at Halle, they found they should not be able to accomplish their design, as there was no chance of having the gates of any of these fortified towns opened (let the rank of the traveller be what it might) after once they were shut: they therefore agreed to dine at Enghien, and sleep at La Ville D'Ath, fifteen

fifteen miles short of their original place of destination.

Nothing of moment occurred till they reached that town. The roads were lined the whole way with emigrants, some on horseback, more on foot, others in carriages, and numbers in carts. Their different figures and modes of travelling, afforded the Duke and Neville ample subject for discourse; and they both thought, from the quantity of people they had met, they should find plenty of room where they meant to stop; but soon discovered, to their no small mortification, many had pursued their journey because they could not meet with accommodations.

The Duke's courier met them at the entrance into the town, and informed his master he had been at all the inns, but had found every room crammed with emigrants, who had insisted upon being taken in (whether full or not) for the night. "Then let us console ourselves, Mr. Neville," said the Duke, "with having a covering over our heads;

heads ; if we can't get taken in any where, we must endeavour to sleep in our carriage. But perhaps we shall be able to meet with some private family which may be willing to spare us a room for one night. It is bitterly cold ; therefore even sitting up by a fire will be a luxury."

"There is one house, your Grace," said the servant, "which they call the English Hotel, where they shewed me a room they would endeavour to spare you ; but it is such a horrid dirty place I could not think of engaging it, at least till your Grace had seen it."

"You did wrong," said the Duke, "as we have no alternative. Bid the postillions drive on ; it must be bad indeed if it is not preferable to sitting in a carriage."

While they proceeded, Neville protested he had been taken in fifty times during his travels by the sound of the English or British Hotel, and had never yet found himself well accommodated at any of them ; he was therefore convinced this was a horrid place
before

before he saw it ; his friend laughed at his prediction ; and in a few minutes the chaise stopped in a narrow dirty street, at a low gateway that led into a sort of stable yard. They alighted, and followed the courier, who, by the Duke's order, took little Alfred in his arms to prevent his being smothered in the dirt. At last they ascended three or four stone steps to the right, and entered the kitchen ; this they discovered from the various implements for cooking scattered about, and a few potatoes and onions strewed upon the dresser. The landlord, a tall dirty fellow, adorned in a greasy night-cap, over which he wore a large cocked hat, had been apprized of the consequence of these new guests by the courier ; but titles were become so familiar to him, they no longer excited either his respect or attention. Without speaking, he preceded the Duke across an adjoining room, and opened a door which led into another, saying, " There, I believe I shall be able to spare you that apartment."

signed on ed, printed and bound by Wm

"We are much obliged to you for wishing to accommodate us," said the Duke. "Your house is very full of company I presume?"

"I believe it is truly," said the fellow, holding the door in his hand; "will this room do for you? there an't another to be had in the whole town if you would give an hundred louis an hour for it."

"Then we ought to think ourselves very fortunate you are so kind as to make us an offer of it," said the Duke. "Will you be so good as to order us a good fire, and we will make the best shift we can."

"*Parbleu!*" said the fellow, "there are a pretty many will make worse shifts to-night," turning upon his heel to give his orders.

"Was there ever such an insolent scoundrel?" said Neville; "I wonder your Grace had common patience with him."

"I won't undertake to defend him," said the Duke; "but I suppose the poor fellow has so nearly made his fortune, he no longer
thinks

thinks it worth his while to be civil; therefore, for fear he should repent of having taken us in, let us set him the example."

They now looked round the room, which was very large, and perfectly corresponded with the entrance, as it was over shoes in dirt, and the furniture placed in a heap in the middle of it, owing to their having had it in contemplation during the day to scrape a little of the filth from the floor.

"Can it be possible this is the best apartment this town affords?" cried Neville; "upon my soul you will be poisoned."

"Necessity, my dear Neville, often obliges us to submit to many inconveniences," replied the Duke; "and I always think it wiser to laugh, than repine upon such occasions. You have been in *Italy*, therefore must know I have much less reason to complain than yourself, as many of our *hotels* are not more inviting than our present quarters." His Grace then began to laugh at the tattered hangings, and was advancing to take

take a survey of two beds in alcoves on one side of the room, when the landlady, who was the counterpart of her husband, entered with a large bundle of wood, followed by two servants, the one a little thin old fellow in a red night-cap, and a dirty pipe in his mouth, armed with a large shovel; the other an immense tall raw-boned woman about thirty, brandishing an enormous birch broom. The landlady, having deposited her burthen, advised her guests to take a short walk, during which time their apartment should be put in order for their reception, observing, it would not be very agreeable to be present while it was cleaned. As the Duke and Neville were perfectly of her opinion, they followed her advice, and took a turn upon the Grandé Place. Not less than a thousand emigrants were assembled in this square, and each group was anxiously devising plans for their return, and anticipating what would be the consequence of that event to the then popular rulers.

of gold and silver was assigned to the
 1842

Convinced

Convinced it would be in vain to look out for better accommodations, the travelers gave up the idea; and having listened for some time to the different orators who were holding forth, the Duke proposed returning to their inn, observing they were not sufficiently interested in the debates to prevent them from feeling the cold. It was quite dusk when they reached their elegant apartment. The Duke's servants were very busy in assisting to arrange the lumber the landlady dignified by the name of furniture. They had made up a large fire; but when the Duke and Neville entered, they could not see each other for smoke: the men were raving, having flung open both windows, to find the room did not clear; but unfortunately the wind was unfavourable. Their kind hostess kept assuring them it was nothing, and merely arose from the fire being just lit. "We had better be starved than stifled in my opinion, Mr. Neville," said the Duke; "therefore, suppose we take another short turn till this place becomes a little more

more habitable." This the landlady assured them it would be in a very few minutes.

Thus encouraged, they sallied forth once more; but this time their progress was impeded by an English travelling-coach which stood across the gateway. "I begin to think we have been rather fortunate after all," said the Duke; "for had the party that coach contains reached Ath before us, we might have been deprived of our well-furnished saloon." At that moment they heard somebody behind them, and upon looking round, saw a servant in a handsome livery, followed by the landlord, who in answer to something the man said, replied, "What is it to me who your master is? I have greater people than him in my house already, who are very much obliged to me for taking them in, and who did not send for me out in the cold thus:—indeed I don't know why I was such a fool as to humour either you or him; if he was King of England, I can't make my house any bigger."

"These

"These new-comers seem to be countrymen of your's, Mr. Neville," said the Duke; "suppose we offer them a seat by our fire-side?"

"As your Grace chuses; it may be an act of charity."

"We shall have one spare bed," rejoined the Duke, "for I have got mine with me, and I think there are two in our apartment. But before I make my proposal, I am curious to hear how politely our landlord will address them."

An elderly gentleman, who was sitting forward in the carriage, now called to the servant in an imperious tone, "Is the fellow coming, William? or are we to wait here all night?"

The landlord, as angry at having been sent for out, as the gentleman could be at his delay, now said in a surly tone, "My house is full—what would the people have?" turning his back upon the coach while he was speaking, and measuring his steps back again.

“Was there ever such an impudent rascal?” said the same person.

At this moment the Duke advanced, and perceiving two other gentlemen besides the speaker, thus addressed them:—“A countryman of your’s, gentlemen, and myself are in possession of the only room there was to spare in the town half an hour ago, which we took up with as our last resource, and are happy it is in our power to offer to share what comforts it affords, as it may be a degree better than spending the night in your carriage.”

The old gentleman who had first spoke, and whose temper seemed very much ruffled, said, with a stiff inclination of his head, “I am obliged to you, Sir; this is the first time in my life I was ever reduced to such an alternative; indeed it is my own fault now, for had I applied to the Governess of the Low Countries, I should not have been detained upon the road for want of horses, of course not have been under the necessity of stopping in such a miserable town; but

every place swarms with these runaway nobles."

Few men were more free from pride than the Duke de Ferrara; yet there was a want of politeness in this speech made him seriously repent he had made an offer that had met with this ungracious return. The speaker had given him to understand he was a person of great consequence; but the display he had made of his intimacy with the Arch-Duchess by no means raised him in the esteem of the Duke: therefore, retreating while he spoke, his Grace said very calmly, "It is not too late to have recourse to your power, Sir; upon making yourself known, the gates of Tournay, or Ghent, will doubtless be opened for you, and in either town you will meet with far better accommodations than I have it in my power to offer you."

More struck, if possible, by the dignity of the Duke's manner, than by his words, the old gentleman called out, "Your kind offer, Sir, will prevent me from having re-

course to the experiment you mention; open the door, William."

The Duke, satisfied to find he had rather brought the stranger to a sense of the obligation he had been endeavouring to confer upon him, stopped while he alighted; he seemed between sixty and seventy, was a tall fine figure, and his countenance still displayed some traces of having once been distinguished for manly beauty. He was followed by his two companions, the first a stout, fat, short figure, seemed between two or three-and-twenty, and instantly addressed the elderly gentleman as my Lord; then cursed the town and all its inhabitants, swearing it was the filthiest place he had ever seen. The last of the two was a young man a year or two older than the former, a slim elegant figure, dressed in a regimental frock; he bowed very politely to the Duke and Mr. Neville the moment he was upon the ground, not chusing just then to express his thanks in any other manner, as it might have been construed into at least a tacit censure of the old

old Lord's conduct, who now addressing the Duke, having just deigned to touch his hat to Mr. Neville, said, "You must be our conductor, Sir."

His Grace, without speaking, preceded him into the house, and led the way into his room, which was now free from smoke, and a couple of small candles were placed upon a dirty table near the fire. Alfred, who was already in possession, came running to meet his father;—he seemed rather surprised at the appearance of so many strangers, but made no remarks; only caught the Duke's hand, and pulling off his glove, said in Italian, "How cold you are, papa; do come to the fire."

The old Lord, of whose countenance the Duke and Mr. Neville had now a very good view, seemed very much disappointed; but having glanced his eyes round the room with evident marks of disapprobation, he took possession of the only arm chair it afforded, and the warmest corner of the fire. He then looked at the Duke and Mr. Neville, and

thought them both, in the general acceptation of the word, fine fellows; but as he had as yet seen nothing to lead him to suppose they were men of any consequence, fearful of lowering himself, he avoided entering into conversation with them; therefore merely grumbled over the misfortunes of the day to his young companions. The Duke soon determined to treat him in his own way; seated himself on the other side of the fire, and took his son upon his knee, to whom he addressed several questions. Neville took the chair next him, and joined in their discourse, which passed in Italian; a few significant smiles were exchanged between him and the Duke, and the child's droll remarks upon what had happened during their absence, and *il Padrone della Casa** afforded them a very good opportunity of giving way to their mirth, which was in reality excited by my Lord's pompous airs. At last, however, the Duke said in

* Master of the House.

English,

English, "I wonder what this commodious *hotel* will afford for our supper? we did not fare very sumptuously at dinner."

"I wish we may not have greater reason for complaint to-night, your Grace," replied Neville; "but I can't say I should relish even ortolans out of the kitchen we crossed."

The sound of *your Grace* had, as they both expected, an instantaneous effect upon their companions; my Lord started at the unexpected and, in some respect, unwelcome sound; his face lengthened, though he seemed to doubt the evidence of his ears: he looked first at the stout young man, then at the other, and seemed to have some difficulty not to express his astonishment more openly; but perfectly conscious now of the rudeness with which he had treated the Duke, he wished in some degree to apologize for his behaviour, yet was very much at a loss how to begin; and before he had framed any excuses suitable to the occasion, three of the Duke's servants came in to put

up and arrange his bed ;—it was one of those calculated for travelling in warm climates, in form like what are used in camps, packed into a large trunk, and made use of occasionally ; it was never more necessary than in the present instance.

His Lordship's countenance varied several times while the servants were thus employed, as their appearance, and the sight of the bed, removed every doubt he still ventured to entertain respecting their master's rank.

When they had done, the Duke addressed one out of livery in English, " Have you seen about supper, Nelson ? "

" The larder only contains a quarter of mutton ; weighs about eight pounds, your Grace, and there are near sixty people in the house. "

The Duke laughed, and said, " Then we can't in conscience expect to come in for a very large share. However, as I am rather of your way of thinking, Mr. Neville, respecting the kitchen, I shall be perfectly satisfied

satisfied if we can but get some good bread and wine."

"The landlord assures me, your Grace, he has got some very good Rhenish," said the valet.

"That will do very well," said the Duke; "bring in a bottle and some water. Alfred shall have his supper, and go to bed; he is tired."

His Lordship gave another involuntary start, and unthinkingly repeated the name of Alfred to himself. His two companions wished to have communicated their thoughts to each other, but did not chuse to do it in a whisper, therefore remained silent. His Lordship threw himself back in his chair, half closed his eyes, and seemed lost in thought for some minutes; he then started from his reverie, made the young officer a sign to draw near, and said something to him in a very low voice; then resumed his former posture, taking every now and then, when he thought he could unperceived, a glance at the Duke. The officer soon left

the room. His Grace smiled at Neville, as much as to say, he is gone to make enquiries who we are; and before Neville could answer him, the Duke's servants returned with the wine and water, &c. and some very tempting biscuits in a neat straw basket. The child began his meal, while the Duke and Mr. Neville each drank a glass of wine. This reminded the stout young man he was also dry; and as the sight of the biscuits had also excited his appetite, he rose, and opening the door, called, in a commanding tone, for Charles, to whom he gave his orders, and had but just resumed his seat when the officer returned. The old Lord was all anxiety to learn the success of his embassy; but the young man, wishing to account in some respect for his absence to the Duke and Mr. Neville, said, "I have been trying to bribe a most amiable chambermaid to accommodate us with some of the Frenchmen's beds."

"I hope you succeeded, Captain," said his Lordship.

"Why

"Why she has deigned to promise to take us under her protection, my Lord," was the answer.

"One of these beds is very much at your Lordship's service, said the Duke, addressing the old Peer: "the fire in the room is its greatest recommendation."

The Peer bowed as he sat; saying, "Conscious as I am we already intrude upon your Grace, my age induces me to avail myself of your polite offer; those young men are far better able than I am to put up with inconveniences."

The Duke merely bowed in return; and the Captain said, looking at the other young man, very drolly, "Since the Earl is so well provided for, Lord Gowrie, I am sure you won't mind where we are put."

The Duke, who was mixing a glass of wine and water for his son, made a sudden stop with the bottle in his hand, and turned his head to take another survey of *Lord Gowrie*. A sort of smothered contempt was soon visible upon his fine expressive countenance;

nance ; but Neville alone made the remark, as the Captain now stood so as to conceal the Duke from the two Lords, waiting for an opportunity to communicate his intelligence before he took his seat ;—it now presented itself ; and the old Peer was very happy to learn the Duke was an Italian.

Charles now made his appearance with the wine, and a cut coarse brown loaf, which he placed upon the table, and was retiring, when Lord Gowrie exclaimed, “ Is this what I ordered ? Who do you think is to eat such stuff of bread, that has very likely been pawed by fifty dirty Frenchmen ? ”

“ The house affords no other, my Lord,” said Charles ; “ and there is not a biscuit to be got in the town, nor indeed any other bread, I am informed ; the emigrants have very nearly created a famine.”

“ The impudent people think it too much trouble to get any thing for their guests,” said the Viscount (for such was his rank), giving a look at the little basket, “ such things are certainly to be had.”

Neville smiled at his Lordship's disappointment, but took no notice.

The servant was once more going to retire, when he again stopped him by saying, "Do you understand me?" again looking at the basket.

"I have made enquiries, my Lord," said the man, "and have been assured there are no such things to be had; and I really don't know where to go to see for any."

"Go to the same place those came from, you stupe," said the Viscount.

"I shan't be allowed to leave the town, my Lord," said Charles, provoked at the appellation; "those biscuits came from Bruffels, his Grace's servants informed me."

A severe look from the Earl, and to find all his hopes thus frustrated, was more than Lord Gowrie could bear: he therefore said, in a tone perfectly demonstrative of his internal rage, "Don't be impudent, fellow; why did not you say so at first?"

"He did tell you there were not any to be had," said the Earl; "you forced him to

to speak," giving Charles a look to leave the room.

"What, don't they sell biscuits here, papa?" said Alfred.

"No, my love," said the Duke.

The little fellow instantly caught up his basket, and looking first at his father, then at the Earl, perfectly understood a look of the former, and advanced towards the old Peer, whom he entreated in Italian, as being most natural to him, to help himself. The Earl understood him; but as he did not speak it very fluently, he was at a loss for words to answer him as he could have wished. The child therefore, repeated his request with increasing earnestness in English. His Lordship's pride had already forsook him, and he now found himself almost outdone by a mere infant in point of knowledge: yet his innocent, artless, and evidently untutored address made a strong impression upon the old Peer, who said, "I can't think of robbing you, my sweet fellow—your name is Alfred I think?"

"Yes,

"Yes, my Lord," said the child, who seemed determined not to take a denial.

The Earl sighed; put by part of his fine auburn hair, which hung in careless waves over his forehead, and contemplated his engaging open countenance for some seconds, then stroked the hair into its place again; and finding he should really please him, said, "I will accept one of your biscuits with thanks, my little fellow."

"Pray take one of each, my Lord," said Alfred; "these are the best."

"Then keep them for yourself, my sweet boy," said the Earl; "for I can't find in my heart to deprive you of what is not to be purchased here."

"Only one, my Lord," said Alfred; "I have got a great many yet; pray take one."

The Earl gazed with a degree of rapture upon the artless entreater, while he said, "Against my will I accept your offer, my dear Alfred; but in return for my compliance must beg one kiss."

Alfred

Alfred instantly presented his lips, and returned the salute. The Earl, quite softened, was even affected by the child's behaviour, and having tried in vain to disperse a starting tear, laid his biscuits down, and took out his handkerchief, endeavouring, under a feigned cough, to conceal his emotion.

Alfred had been early taught to pay the greatest respect to age, but had not been instructed to pay any great deference to titles; as the Duke thought

“Whoe'er amidst the sons

“Of reason, valour, liberty, and virtue,

“Display'd distinguished merit, was a noble

“Of Nature's own creating.”

The child, therefore, when he left the Earl, following the dictates of his heart, made up to the young officer, passing Lord Gowrie for that purpose. The Captain at first refused, though with the utmost politeness and kindest expressions of gratitude suitable to the age of the almost irresistible pleader, who forced him to comply with his request. During their debate, Lord Gowrie, highly piqued

piqued to think a child of five years old was deficient in that respect he thought so much his due, caught up the loaf, and cut himself a slice, which he began very eagerly to devour; and when Alfred presented him his basket, he refused him in a tone the child had been so little accustomed to, that, having inherited no small portion of his father's spirit, he turned upon his heel, and perceiving a smile upon the Duke's countenance, instantly resumed his seat at the table between his knees, and drank his glass of wine and water.

Could looks have annihilated Lord Gowrie, he would certainly have fallen a sacrifice to those of the Earl, who had the utmost difficulty not to express his anger still more forcibly. And as his Lordship was infinitely more anxious to atone for his former want of politeness, than he had then been to display his consequence, he sought by every means in his power to make the discourse general. The noise there was in the next room afforded him a subject, and

French

French politics soon became his theme. He particularly addressed himself to the Duke, who listened very attentively to his strictures, and was soon convinced the old Peer possessed very superior talents. Mr. Neville and the young officer, whose name was Melifont, joined occasionally in the conversation; but Lord Gowrie, conscious he had seriously offended, and perfectly acquainted with his grandfather's (for such the Earl was) irritability, which sometimes degenerated into implacability, prudently chose to remain silent. The Earl, who was astonished to find so young a man as the Duke

"Could debate on commonwealth affairs, as if they had been
all his study,

"Yet talk of war—he heard a fearful battle rendered him in
music;

"And when he turned to any cause of policy,

"The Gordian knot of it he seemed to unloose

"Familiar as his garter,"

atoned by several delicate hints, though he made no regular excuses for having been out of temper; related several little delays

he

he had met with upon the road, condemning his own petulance during his recital, and declaring if he had not been in very great haste, he should have laughed at what had that day made him seriously angry. He then informed the Duke he was upon his return to England from one of the German Courts, where he had been upon business of importance, and that he was Earl of Melton.

The moment he mentioned his name, the Duke fixed his eyes stedfastly upon him for some seconds; but conscious his glowing cheeks might surprise the Earl, he bent down over his son, to whom he addressed a frivolous question. Neville, who was perfectly acquainted with the Earl by reputation, guessed, from the Duke's heightened colour, he had the same advantage; however, as his Grace seemed rather at a loss what to say, and the Earl, having taken a pinch of snuff, seemed to be waiting for some answer to the information he had given them, he said, in return for his communication, that his name was Neville; then mentioned his

his near relationship to Lord Fortrose; and concluded by saying he had just been the tour of Europe. The Earl said, though he had not the honour of being among Lord Fortrose's intimate friends, he was sufficiently acquainted with him by reputation to respect him infinitely. "His Lordship resides chiefly in the country I think, Mr. Neville?"

"London does not agree with my father, my Lord," was the answer. And as the Earl had the peerage by heart, he traced the genealogy of the Nevilles from the time of Edward the Third; then reverted to his own family, which he took care to convince the Duke was far more ancient.

During this discourse Alfred was put into his father's bed; and soon after nine o'clock the Duke's servants came in to lay the cloth for supper. His Grace asked them if they had been able to procure any thing out of the small stock of provisions they had mentioned; one of them answered, "We have been promised the leg of mutton, your Grace."

"We

"We shall sup in a style at last you find, Mr. Neville," said the Duke; "but I am afraid many of our noisy neighbours will come off with a short allowance," giving the men a look to set plates for the whole party, which they did; and in a few minutes the door opened, and the joint was bringing in; but seven-and-twenty Frenchmen, who were all arranged at a long table in the adjoining room, impatiently waiting for their supper, and knowing what the house afforded, to see the best joint pass thus under their noses, was more than they could bear;—the servant was therefore seized by the flap of his coat when just within the room, and pulled back again; another, who was holding open the door, caught the dish from his fellow-servant's hand, and was going to place it upon the table. He was foiled, however, in the attempt, as one of the ravenous tribe sprung forward, and seized the joint by the knuckle, leaving the man with the empty dish, and marched off in triumph, to the no small joy and diversion of his companions, who

who shouted with applause. The Duke fairly burst out a laughing, and the Earl, who never ate meat suppers, joined in his mirth : in short, every body seemed pleased, except the servants, whose chief dependance rested upon the remains. The landlord, who was soon informed of what had happened, came raving in amongst the Frenchmen, protesting he would turn them all out of his house. This was boasting of doing more than he would have been able to accomplish. However, while some were retorting upon him in his own strain, and he was cursing the whole crew, as he called them, others were devouring the unfortunate joint. Not one more Frenchman should come into his house, he swore by all the saints in the Calendar ; and nothing more should these have. Nobody could eat what they had stole, now they had pulled it about in such a manner : he therefore asked the Duke, whose civility had quite won his heart, if he would be so good as to put up with a very nice fricassée of mutton he had intended for

the

the party which had deprived him of his supper. The Duke applied to the Earl, saying, in his opinion, the landlord's account of the ragout was not very tempting, and the party in the next room seemed much more in need of it than they were. "I beg your Grace will put me out of the question," said the Earl; "I seldom sup, and never touch meat." Neville declared he preferred a slice of the brown loaf to the vaunted fricassée; so said Mellifont; therefore, without waiting for Lord Gowrie's decision, the Duke told the landlord they would wave their claim to his kind offer in favour of their neighbours. The landlord swore he was too good, but he would fling it into the street, where he meant to turn them, before they should have it. The servants, therefore, put in their petition, and gained the prize; as the Duke thought it would not be just the poor wretch of an inn-keeper should be a loser because he meant to favour them, convinced the Frenchmen would not pay a farthing more than they had agreed for

exogt 1."

for if they devoured every thing the house contained. More wine was therefore ordered, and at last the room-door was shut. Lord Gowrie dared not give way to his repentment, or he would have sent the poor emigrants to a much warmer birth than they now enjoyed. The Earl said he should be very glad when he was once more on the other side of the channel; adding, "I have at different times travelled over the greatest part of Europe, but never yet (very large towns excepted) met with half the comforts in a foreign inn many mere country ale-houses afford in England."

"Your's is a very general remark, my Lord," said the Duke: "as I have never yet been in Great Britain, I am no judge; but I think the Netherlands in general afford very good accommodations."

"I am really amazed, your Grace," said the Earl, "to hear both you and your son speak such good English, never having been in the country."

"I spoke

"I spoke it as well as I do now, my Lord, before I was my son's age. I have servants of four different nations, and my son is sometimes with one, and sometimes with another every day; and as they have orders never to address him but in their own language, English, French, and German are as familiar to him as his native dialect."

"An Italian I presume, your Grace?" observed the Earl; "the sweet fellow addressed me first in that language."

"A Sicilian, my Lord," said the Duke, convinced this was a question the Earl might have spared himself, as the officer had no doubt satisfied his curiosity in that respect."

"I have ever heard Sicily described as a charming island," continued the Earl, "and particularly healthy; but I own the earthquakes it has so lately experienced, would make me almost dread to fix my tent there."

"Calabria suffered almost equally at the time you allude to, my Lord," said the Duke; and so many other parts of Europe

have at different times been equally unfortunate, that dreadful as the shock was Sicily experienced in 1783, I have not heard of any emigrations it occasioned. For my own part I now spend great part of my time at Naples, though I put infinite faith in the fordier's creed, predestination! But I have little now to attach me to Sicily."

The Duke sighed as he concluded; and the Earl involuntarily re-echoed his expression of sorrow; then said, "I did intend to have visited Naples ere this. I never was farther in Italy than Venice: indeed if my time had not been so limited, I should have crossed the Tyrol before I returned home, and most probably have taken a view of Sicily." The Earl paused; then said, "But I hope your Grace was no material sufferer from a catastrophe every one must deplore?"

"Several of my near relations lost their lives during that fatal event," said the Duke; "I was not in Sicily myself."

"The

"The accounts we heard were dreadful, your Grace," said the Earl; "with many others I sincerely sympathised with the survivors:" then, as if to change the subject, "Which does your Grace prefer, Messina or Palermo?"

"I was born in the latter city, my Lord, therefore, perhaps for that reason, give it the preference. But I chiefly, when in Sicily, reside at a villa I have in the Val di Mazari near Trapani."

"The Sicilian nobility are mostly of Spanish extraction I believe, your Grace?" rejoined the Earl.

"In general, my Lord."

"Pray is your Grace acquainted with any part of the St. Severino family?"

The Duke fixed his eyes upon the Peer, while he replied, "I was intimately so during their life-time, my Lord. The late Duke of that name died about two years ago; his title and estates centered in my family: my eldest son, who sleeps there, bears that name."

The Earl shrunk from the Duke's scrutinizing looks, and was evidently for a few seconds lost in astonishment; but speedily rousing himself, fearful of being remarked, he said, with some hesitation, "A very great family I always understood, though I can't say I was acquainted with every branch of it; but pray, your Grace, was not there once, or have I been misinformed, a Count, (Italian Counts, I know, are mere nominal titles), but I understood there was a Count Mondovi, a relation of the St. Severino family?"

The Duke, who secretly enjoyed the Earl's perplexity, knowing full well from whence it arose, said very coolly, "I presume your Lordship means the late Duke; he was fourth son to the former one, and did bear the title you allude to."

"Oh! the fourth son," said the Earl: then, having taken a few moments for reflection, he proceeded, "Pray did he leave any daughters behind him? I presume he
had

had no sons, from his title and estates having devolved to your Grace."

"He had but one daughter, my Lord, who married against his consent, and preceded him to the grave."

"God bless me!" said the Earl, and was going to put some other question, when the chamber-maid already mentioned, came to summon Lord Gowrie and Mellifont to bed; they desired her to come again in half an hour. "Yes, pardie," said the lovely nymph, "then you may give up all hopes of ever getting a truss of straw; if you know your own interest, you will come along this minute."

They both rose, and Lord Gowrie desired her to lead the way, adding, "I suppose we shall be charmingly lodged."

"You must not think to find fault such times as these," said the maid; "if you are so difficult, you should have brought such a bed as *that* with you," pointing to the Duke's.

“ Call my servant,” said the Viscount ;
“ I suppose he knows where you mean to
put us ; and do you mind and warm my bed
well.”

“ Our beds don’t want for airing now,”
said the damsel ; “ but my master don’t
allow people to run about the house picking
and chusing, and finding fault ; he has enough
to do as it is ;—if there is a bit of plate left
about over night, it is sure to be missing in
the morning ; these are sharp times, though
all our guests are Marquis’s, Counts, and
Chevaliers : faith, want and hunger make
them no better than other people, as my mas-
ter says.”

“ Good God !” exclaimed the Duke,
“ what a dreadful thing it is to be suspected
of being poor ? you are supposed capable
of being guilty of any crime ; though I must
own the behaviour of the company in the
next room was not that of gentlemen,
admitting them to have been both hungry
and distressed.”

“ Lord

"Lord bless me! what they did to-night was nothing," said the damsel, "to the riots they kick up sometimes; these were a very quiet set. But only last week, a matter of fifteen hundred of them, who live in the town, fought with half the inhabitants, and would have provisions at their own price; so now there is nothing to be had for either love or money, and we all expect to be starved to death if they remain masters of the town as they are at present. But come along, gentlemen, or I shall be charmingly abused by those we have got in the house; I am black and blue already, for one must not speak to them forsooth."

"Oh! shocking," said the Duke; "I thought French gentlemen were all politeness to the fair sex."

Lord Gowrie looked at the fair nymph, shrugged up his brawny shoulders, and smiled, or more properly, grinned at the Duke; then took his leave with Mellifont for the night.

The Duke and Earl having made a few remarks upon what had passed, the latter wanted to renew the conversation the entrance of the chamber-maid had interrupted; but the Duke did not afford him an opportunity, protesting he was very sleepy, having risen early in the morning; and presuming the Earl must be fatigued, he thought they had better try to get a little repose. In less than a quarter of an hour each took possession of his respective bed, and the Duke soon fell into a profound slumber by the side of his son, whom even all the noise and bustle in the next room had not waked. Not so the Earl and Neville; they soon found they had such a variety of bed-fellows, it was in vain to attempt to sleep. Neville was the first who jumped up, lit a candle, ran to his bed, and protested there were live animals enough parading about to have carried him away had he allowed them time. The Earl made him a sign not to wake the Duke; and also rose with great precaution, dressed, and then wrapping himself in a sheet, lay down

down again. Neville stretched himself out upon the table, but was not able to close his eyes; he was therefore very happy when he heard the Duke move, as he was very cold. The Earl and he related their misfortunes to his Grace, and Neville made up the fire, as it would have been useless to make any more attempts to close their eyes; for the moment it was day-break, many of the emigrants were in motion to pursue their journey to Coblentz.

The Earl soon rose, but forbore making many complaints, only protested when next he visited the Continent, he would come provided as his Grace was: then observed, that as there was no chance of getting anything for breakfast, he thought the sooner they pursued their journey the better; adding, "Your Grace means to go through Tournay I think you said last night?"

The Duke declared it was his intention.

"And I mean to take the Ghent road," said the Earl, "else I am sure one or other of us would be detained; but I shall be

very happy to renew my acquaintance with your Grace in London. I reside in Piccadilly; any body will shew you Melton House; there I hope you will afford me an opportunity of renewing my thanks for the distinguished politeness your Grace has shewn me here."

The Duke returned a polite answer, but did not seem at all inclined to avail himself of the invitation; and his Lordship was convinced in his own mind the Duke had not forgot what passed over-night previous to his title being announced.

His Grace was hardly dressed when the Viscount and Mellifont entered. The former, before he paid his compliments, said he only wished he had known the party had been stirring so soon; while Mellifont, having made the usual enquiries, and learned what had happened to the Earl and Mr. Neville, said, in a gay tone to his companion, "You find we ought not to complain, my Lord,"

"Not complain!" cried the Viscount; "I never was served such a trick in my life.
Would

Would you believe it, your Grace, we have slept in the hay-loft—positively in the hay-loft ! I don't wonder now that good-for-nothing creature is black and blue ; I am sure she deserves it."

This was uttered in such a surly tone the Duke could not help smiling ; and the Earl said, " At all events you have been much better off than either Mr. Neville or me ; a truss of clean straw would have been a luxury in comparison to our beds."

Mellifont gave a most ludicrous account of their apartment, which was literally according to the Viscount's nomination, the hay-loft. Mattresses were stretched out in a double row, which put him in mind of an hospital in a camp ; the coverings were blankets, horse-cloths, great coats, cloaks—in short, any thing they could meet with ; and not less than thirty French nobles shared this elegant apartment with them. Lord Gowrie had insisted upon returning ; but the maid, having shewn him one of the best beds, as she called it, put out her candle,

found her way down in the dark, and left him to follow if he chose, but as they had ascended by a ladder, he did not chuse to run the risk : and they were not even permitted to vent their spleen upon the occasion, as the Frenchmen enjoined them silence under the penalty of being thrown down into the stable below through the trap-door, if they ventured to disturb them ; they were therefore obliged to fumble out their respective mattresses, and stretch themselves out as well as they could. Having laughed over the adventures of the night while the horses were put to, the Duke, Neville, and Alfred took their leave and the road to Tournay, while the Earl, Viscount, and Mellifont, pursued their's to Ghent.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

DURING their drive, the Duke asked Neville what he thought of the party they had just quitted? "That the Earl is one of the proudest Peers Great Britain can boast of; and I dare say he never met with a more serious mortification in the course of his life than he did last night: La Ville D'Ath will be uppermost in his thoughts for some time. As for Lord Gowrie, he perfectly answers the description I have heard given of him by some of my countrymen, who met him on his tour; for he has travelled—to what purpose, I leave to your Grace to judge."

Upon

Upon his return to England, the Earl got him into the House of Commons, where he chose to make a display of his oratory, and after keeping the house in a roar of laughter for about ten minutes, gave up the point, and has not made a second attempt. Report, which barely does him justice in my opinion, makes him out a stupid, greedy, obstinate, ignorant, and even selfish fellow; yet disagreeable as are his manners, I own I think his figure still more unprepossessing: altogether, I never saw a man whom I could so thoroughly despise."

"He certainly is a most unamiable being," said the Duke. "Is the young officer (whom I am convinced you must like as much as I do), any relation of the Earl's?"

"His grandson, your Grace. The Earl had three sons and one daughter; the eldest son has been dead some years, and left only one daughter, now a first rate belle, a friend of mine wrote me word, and a widow, and is very much respected in the fashionable world. The Lord Gowrie, in whose praise I have been

been holding forth, is the only child of the Earl's second son, who has also paid the debt of nature; what became of the third I am not able to inform you, or whether he is still living;—his marriage with a foreigner made him an alien to his family, as ever after he resided abroad, but whether in France, Germany, or Italy I really can't say. The Earl has been very much blamed for his conduct towards him, and not without great reason; but he thinks the sum of filial duty is concentrated in the words *blind obedience*, and never forgave Mr. St. Aubyn (for such is the family name) for not plighting his faith to a maiden lady, almost old enough to have been his mother, but whom his Lordship had pitched upon for his bride: however, the poor forlorn spinster has paid her unfaithful swain a very high compliment, for she has positively worn the willow ever since."

"You are acquainted with her then, I presume," said the Duke with a smile.

"Intimately,

"Intimately, your Grace; she is a very near neighbour of Lord Fortrose's in the country, and is niece to the Earl of Melton."

"Upon my word I think the poor lady was to be pitied," said the Duke; "pray what is her name?"

"Miss (though she has now assumed the appellation of Mrs.) Studeville, your Grace; and she is the only survivor of one of the most ancient families in Gloucestershire—she will say in England! indeed she particularly delights in recapitulating her genealogy; and would almost say, like the Welchman talking of his pedigree, 'in the reign of that king (one of his ancestors) this world was created;' for she affects to be of royal extraction, if not originally descended from the Gods!"

The Duke laughed very heartily; then asked, "How came this Captain Mellifont to be the Earl's grandson, as he does not bear the family name?"

"He is the son of his Lordship's daughter, your Grace; who, not chusing to be disposed

disposed of to the highest bidder, flung herself away upon a commoner of that name."

"Dreadful!" said the Duke; "who can wonder at the petulance the poor old man displays when we consider the serious vexations he has met with? I hope Lord Gowrie will follow the good example of his father, for I presume he made a prudent choice."

"In point of family, your Grace; but I never understood the lady possessed any other recommendation, as she was one of the seven daughters of a Scotch Earl; but her economy, I have been told, made ample amends for her deficiency in point of fortune. However, it is now reported, that for fear Miss St. Aubyn, his Lordship's grand-daughter, or his doughty heir, should mix the blood of the Meltons with any less pure stream, he means to unite the cousins."

"Sure the young lady's guardian angel, in the shape of some agreeable man, will step forward

forward and prevent the old Peer from realizing so absurd a project," said the Duke ; for if she possesses either discernment, taste, or even common sense, she must be miserable with Lord Gowrie. Is the Earl rich ?"

"By no means ; and as ostentation is one of his predominant failings, he sacrifices every thing to appearance ; but I must do him the justice to say, though I am sure to you it is a very needless observation, he is a man of great abilities, ranked among our first orators, and a very great statesman."

"What a pity," said the Duke, "so many foibles, and such an evident want of feeling, or perhaps I ought to say, affection for his children, should obscure such shining talents !"

"Very true ; and how must such a man be mortified when he looks at the elegant youth who is to transmit his illustrious name to posterity ; for should the race continue to degenerate as it has done in Lord Gowrie, what sort of wretches are we to expect will succeed to the title of Melton in future ?"

The

The Duke smiled at Neville's foresight. "I hope Captain Mellifont is not an absolute dependant upon the Earl?"

"He inherited a small fortune from his father, to which may be added his pay as a Captain in the army; and I am assured he is a young man of spirit, therefore conforms to his circumstances, and with becoming pride avoids laying himself under any pecuniary obligations to the Earl, to whom he does not pay half the court Lord Gowrie does."

"Yet he seems the greatest favourite," observed the Duke; "and I hope he will reap the benefit of that partiality at the old Peer's death."

Their discourse now turned upon the surrounding objects, and a short time brought them to Tournay, where they made an excellent breakfast at L'Imperatrice Reine, a very good inn: they then proceeded to Courtray, where they dined, and reached Ostend the same evening, and drove to the best Flemish house, though l'Hotel D'Angleterre had

had been strongly recommended to them ; but Neville declared the very sound gave him an ague. They had no reason to be sorry they had taken up their quarters among natives of the town ; in less than a quarter of an hour the Captain of a by-boat who had brought over a choice freight, to use their own term, came to solicit they would return with him ; he meant to sail by the morning tide if he met with any passengers, and the regular packet between there and Dover would not sail till evening. " I shall certainly take the advantage of daylight," said the Duke, " therefore we will go with you, Captain ; but we should chuse to have the vessel to ourselves."

" Undoubtedly, your Grace," said the Captain ; " fortunately the Earl of Melton, who is just arrived, did not chuse to engage me, though his Lordship had no objection to cross with me if I could make up my freight ; however, he must now wait for the packet."

The

The Duke looked at Mr. Neville with a smile; then said, "I have no wish to exclude the Earl and his party, Captain; if his Lordship is inclined to go with you, pray take him; notwithstanding what has passed between us, I shall equally look upon myself as having freighted you."

The Captain bowed; and, having thanked the Duke, said, "The tide serves too soon for his Lordship I am afraid; he wished to get a good night's rest, he told me, though I am rather of opinion he will now alter his note."

"He will please himself Captain; I don't wish him to suppose himself at all obliged to me, nor to deprive him of the opportunity of crossing by day-light. What time does the tide serve?"

"At five o'clock, your Grace."

"And how long do you think we shall be upon the water?"

"Not more than seven hours, your Grace, if the present wind holds." The Captain took his leave, and the Duke gave his ser-

vants

wants proper orders to have every thing put on board as speedily as possible. Before his Grace and Mr. Neville retired, the Captain came to inform them that the Earl would be of their party, adding, "As your Grace did not seem to wish it, I did not tell his Lordship you had freighted me; I hope I did not do wrong."

"Quite the reverse," said the Duke; "we shall trust to you not to let us oversleep ourselves in the morning." The Captain promised to be punctual, and once more took leave. The moment the door was shut, the Duke said, "We should really have been quite as well, Mr. Neville, without this proud man; however, I presume he will confine himself to the cabin; for my own part I am a capital sailor. Lord Fortrose has told you, I presume, I keep a yacht in which I take very frequent trips during summer; indeed I am a true islander, particularly partial to the water."

"I wish I could say as much, your Grace," replied Neville; "I am always very ill." They then by mutual consent retired to rest.

CHAP. IV.

EXACTLY at five they were roused by the Captain, and found the Earl and his party had preceded them on board. Little passed except the usual compliments and enquiries after each other's health since they parted. The vessel being ready to sail, and near an hour after the time appointed, all was hurry and bustle upon deck for fear they should not get out of port. The Earl observed he was in the way, therefore said he would go down; Lord Gowrie followed him. The Duke, Neville, and Mellifont preferred remaining

maining upon deck, the morning being very clear, though there was a very brisk breeze at sea. His Grace was in excellent spirits, and having sent his son below under the care of his servants, entered into conversation with the Captain, who observed, from the remarks he made, the Duke was an experienced sailor. "I fancy myself at home upon the Mediterranean, Captain," said the Duke; "I was ever partial to the sea, and had I been an Englishman, should indubitably have entered the naval service; as it is, I gratify my predilection for the watery element by steering a cockle-shell I dignify with the name of a pleasure-boat from Sicily to Naples, and back again. I am now in my sailor's dress," alluding to a pair of trowsers he wore, a very handsome loose great coat or pelisse lined with fur, and a cap of the same. The sea was much rougher when they were out of port than any of them had expected, and the wind seemed to increase; neither Neville nor Mellifont would go below, though they were both very ill. The

Duke

Duke laughed at their woeful faces, and declared he enjoyed the fine breeze, though he agreed they might have found it pleasanter had there been less wind; but they must console themselves with the certainty of being so much the sooner at the end of their voyage. They were in Dover bay between one and two o'clock, which was very fast sailing the Captain observed, though he had done it in as little time when the water was much smoother. As there was not water enough for them to get into port, boats, as usual, came out to fetch the passengers, and were alongside the vessel before she laid to, eager to offer their services. The Duke, who had been remarking the difference between the British and Sicilian coast as the former opened to his view, asked his companions if they did not anticipate the delight they should feel at being once more safe upon *terra firma*? they declared it was at that moment the height of their ambition. Mellifont therefore went down to enquire what the Earl meant to do? "Go on shore

by all means," the old Peer said; he was three parts dead already, and literally crawled upon deck for that purpose, followed by the Viscount whose youth had enabled him to bear the fatigue they had both undergone much the best of the two. The Duke, who was standing at the helm with Neville, said in a low voice the moment he saw the old man's head above the stairs, "This trip has not improved the Earl's looks."

"I wish it may his temper, your Grace," rejoined Neville in the same tone.

His Lordship really, as he had himself observed just before, looked three parts dead, and was very fretful and peevish, though he made an effort to conceal his bad humour when the Duke enquired very politely how he had borne his passage? "I never suffered so much in so short a time, your Grace," was his reply; I sincerely wish I had gone to Calais."

"That trip is frequently as long, and sometimes longer, than this, my Lord, owing

to

to a point of land we are always obliged to make," said the Captain; "and the sea is equally rough if the wind an't very fair indeed."

"May be so," said the Earl; "only let me get on shore, I hope I shall be better then;" as it was, he was obliged to be supported. "Your Grace don't seem to have been at all affected by our voyage?"

"Not in the slightest degree, my Lord," said the Duke; but here is my son (Alfred was just then brought upon deck) who seems to have been ill enough for us both."

The boats being ready, the Captain prevented any farther discourse by jumping into one, and desiring the company to follow him as quick as possible, because even the bay was rather rough. "This boat lies the best," he went on, "therefore you, gentlemen, had better all get into it, and leave the servants to follow in the other."

Ill as the Earl was, he now determined to shew every mark of politeness and respect to the Duke, who offered to assist him in his descent

descent into the boat, but he declared he would not precede him; his Grace therefore, with that genuine politeness that differs so widely from ceremonious etiquette, handed his son to the Captain, and then stepped down himself. Neville and Mellifont helped the old Peer to get down, who placed himself opposite the Duke, saying, "Thank God I am within sight of land; but this motion is worse than that of the vessel."

"There is no danger, my Lord," said the man at the helm, "and we shall soon be off."

Lord Gowrie rolled (for such his motion might be called) down after his grandfather, and slumped himself into the seat next him. Neville took the place below the Viscount, and Mellifont crossed to the seat next the Duke, now between him and the Captain who had got Alfred in his arms; there was not room for more than six.

The boatmen immediately put off, and began to row for shore; there was still a strong gale, and as the waves frequently dashed

dashed against the side of the boat, those who sat on the outside were often covered with the spray: this the Duke remarked, and observed Lord Gowrie and he had got the two best places from being in the middle, the Earl having made way when his heavy grandson got down. The Earl now said, "Very true," your Grace; Lord Gowrie chose to shove me out of the seat I had chosen, and I was too weak to make much resistance." At that moment a very heavy sea almost covered the Earl, and made him exclaim in a peevish tone, "Z—ds! at this rate I shall be drowned before we get on shore." The Viscount, by way of appeasing him, protested he had no intention to take the best place, and entreated the Earl would change with him, which at last the old man agreed to; and nothing would have been more easy than for Lord Gowrie to have stood up, and thus let the Earl slide himself into his seat, instead of which he chose to assist the old Peer in rising as he sat, meaning to take the advantage he ought to

have allowed him to have done. A moment's reflection would doubtless have made the Earl object to rising; however, he was half upon his legs when the Captain, who saw a large wave coming, called out "For God's sake take care, we shall overset!" He had not time to finish his sentence before Lord Gowrie started up, as he said, to let the Earl take his place, when he fell against the poor old man, already upon the totter, and fairly sent him backwards over the side of the boat, while he sunk once more himself into his former seat. For the space of three seconds a sort of general consternation prevailed, every one expecting to see the Earl rise, and all prepared to assist him: but this hope soon vanished, and Lord Gowrie roared out, though he had not made the slightest attempt himself, and was the only one who could have saved him at the moment of his fall, "Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! save him, for God's sake save him! will nobody try to save him? I swear to give a thousand pounds to any one who makes the trial:"

and

The Earl had disappeared almost instantaneously ; and the Captain and sailors were entreating every body would sit still, or they should all go to the bottom. The idea of self-preservation induced every one but the Duke to obey, who the moment the accident happened, had thrown off his great coat, and in ten seconds, having disencumbered himself of the greatest part of his clothes, seeing the Earl rise at some distance from the boat, just said, before any one had remarked what he had been about, " Lie quietly on your oars," and plunged into the sea. Astonishment at what appeared to every body little short of madness, kept every one as silent as consternation had done before. Had any one known what the Duke's intentions were, they would most likely, even by main force, have prevented him from thus rashly, as they thought, venturing his life. Neville was the first who broke silence, by exclaiming, " Merciful

heaven,

heaven, save and protect him! he will certainly be drowned." Alfred, terrified beyond measure, though unconscious of his father's danger till Neville spoke, now rent the air with his screams; the Captain tried in vain to console him; then ordered the boatmen to bear towards the Duke, whom they saw to be an excellent swimmer, and who was making for the spot where he had seen the Earl rise. "Well, by God," said one of the sailors, "I would not have made such an attempt for all my Lord's fortune: however, my lads, let us do all in our power to save the brave gentleman; but as for the poor old fellow, why do you see, 'tis all up with him."

Neville promised to reward them if they did but make up to the Duke. "Fore George, master," said the one at the helm, "I would not see him go down for a good deal; so pull away, Jack."

During this speech the Earl rose for the third, and, as they all called out, last time; and they saw his Grace making every effort, but

but in vain, to catch hold of him; they therefore gave up all hopes, and even nearly forgot the poor old man in their alarm at the Duke's disappearance almost at the same moment. Neville, who was now half frantic as well as Alfred, pulled up a rope that laid in the boat, which he prepared to fling, and kept entreating the sailors to devise some method to assist the Duke, whom they all supposed had either been seized with a sudden cramp, or, too much exhausted by the roughness of the waves, had sunk through fatigue. The men, almost as anxious as himself, got some more cords, saying, "He will certainly rise, let's be handy."

In this state of (to all but Lord Gowrie) dreadful suspense they remained for fifteen or twenty seconds, trying to get as near as possible to the spot where it was likely he would rise, when at the end of that time he appeared within a few yards, and to their increased astonishment, they perceived he held the Earl's great coat in his left hand. Alfred was the first who screamed out, "Oh!"

"papa, papa!" and though they were so near him, owing to the amazing violence of the waves, it was a minute or more before they could get to his assistance, who finding himself excessively fatigued through the want of one arm, was obliged to take the coat in his teeth, and thus supported the body till Neville, who leaned over the side of the boat, caught the coat out of his mouth. Knowing the danger there was of oversetting their little skiff, the sailors dared not, much as they wished it, even offer to assist the Duke, who desired them (though he seemed and felt rather exhausted by the almost incredible exertions he had made) merely to keep an equal balance; and the moment he was relieved from his charge, he got once more into the boat, and notwithstanding the recent fatigue he had undergone, assisted in pulling the lifeless body (for such it was to all appearance) in after him.

The sight of papa, his careffes, and the assurances he gave his little Alfred that he was very well, quite calmed the sweet fellow.

Lord

Lord Gowrie began to overwhelm his Grace with thanks, declaring, whether his dear grandfather lived or died, without saying which he should prefer, he would give the thousand pounds he had offered to bestow upon any of the sailors, had they chose to have run the same risk his Grace had done, to be distributed among the different hospitals London abounded with; and concluded by telling the boatmen they were all cowards. "Why for the matter of that, my Lord," said one of them, "look ye, 'twas a guinea to a nutmeg the Duke (God bless him) did not lose his life; and I never yet saw such a swimmer—he was like a cork upon the water: however, a few minutes more would have done for him, take my word for it, in such a sea; and since you are so fond of the old gentleman, I wonder you did not try to prevent his falling; any of us, had we been as handy, could and would have done that; but as for jumping overboard after him, that was another man's matter."

Neither his Grace, Neville, nor Mellifont attended either to the Viscount or the sailor. The Duke, assisted by them, laid the body in a proper posture to discharge the quantity of water the poor old man had perforce swallowed. Having placed him across one of the seats, the Duke tore open all the wraps about his neck; and while he was thus employed, kept encouraging the men to pull away for shore with all their might, by saying, "I will reward you handsomely for your former and present exertions, my good fellows; every moment is now of the utmost consequence when you reflect the life of a fellow-creature depends upon your speed."

His Grace's promises, added to their own humanity, made the men strain every nerve to reach land, while they expressed their wonder to each other at the almost miracle the Duke had performed. The water by this time began to run very freely out of the Earl's mouth, nose, and ears, and his Grace said he began to entertain some hopes he

might

might recover. Lord Gowrie said, "Lying with his face downwards was enough to stifle him." "I suppose he would like to have the old gentleman laid upon his back," said the sailor who had before addressed him, in a low voice to his companions: no one else took any notice of the Viscount's remark.

The servants and sailors who were in the other boat, having seen the accident, were equally anxious to assist the Duke when he jumped into the sea, and had come up with them just after the Earl had been lifted into the boat he fell from. His Grace called to his valet, and gave him orders what to prepare the moment he reached the shore; being, as he had observed, particularly fond of the water, and very often upon it, his Grace had frequently been a witness of similar scenes to the one he had now been so principal an actor in, and had, out of a motive of benevolence, made a particular study of the rules laid down by the English Humane Society; he was therefore perfectly competent to prescribe in such cases.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding the earnest endeavours of the sailors, it was ten minutes or more before they reached the beach; during which time the Earl displayed no signs of life. The other boat was not five seconds behind them. There was a crowd assembled, as is usual upon such occasions, where they run on shore, which they did nearly opposite the York Hotel, and not more than a hundred yards from it. The Duke, who had been prevailed upon to put on his fur great coat and slippers, jumped over the side the moment the boat was aground, and, assisted by Neville and Mellifont, took the Earl upon his back, and ran up the beach preceded by the master of the hotel. The crowd followed, but the Duke, having deposited his lifeless burthen upon a bed, desired no more than half a dozen people might be admitted into the room: the Viscount, Neville, Mellifont, the landlord, Captain of the packet, and his Grace's valet were therefore the only people suffered to remain; the other servants waited without
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the door to execute what orders they might receive. The Earl was then immediately stripped, and every method prescribed by the Society already mentioned was put in practice to recover him. Lord Gowrie objected to many things that were done; stamped about the room when he found no one minded what he said; affected to be quite inconsolable—in short, became so troublesome that the Duke at last very calmly told him, if he continued to behave so absurdly, he should be under the disagreeable necessity of ordering him to be taken out of the room. He attempted to excuse himself by placing all his follies to the excess of grief; repeatedly declaring, if he survived his grandfather, he was certain the shock would prove too much for his reason. “Why, indeed you seem almost fit for St. Luke’s now, my Lord,” said the Captain. At that moment Nelson (the Duke’s valet) exclaimed, “His Lordship certainly breathes, your Grace!” This assurance occasioned general joy; but Lord Gowrie rushed forward, crying,

crying, "Oh! repeat those words! does he live? shall I be so blest?"

"I should be sorry to delude your Lordship with false hopes," said the Duke; "I trust the Earl will recover; but I am not infallible; and your late grief makes me dread what might be the effect of your despair."

The Viscount had given orders for a surgeon to be sent for the moment he entered the house, and had repeatedly desired nothing might be done till he arrived. The Captain, who was no more the dupe of his affected sorrow than the Duke, or indeed any one present, now said, "I fancy the undertaker might have come with the doctor, your Grace, if you had not known what to prescribe for the poor old gentleman better than any of us; for ten to one, with the best intentions in the world, we should have killed him outright."

In a short time every one was convinced the Earl was recovering, and bestowed those praises, so much his due, upon the Duke:

while

while Lord Gowrie fell upon his knees by the bed-side, and with what he thought well-counterfeited rapture, seized the Earl's hand which he carried to his lips, declaring his joy was almost as ungovernable as his grief had been. Mellifont, his eyes sparkling with delight, exclaimed, "Heaven be praised, the pulse returns! Believe me, your Grace, the occurrences of the last hour will ever be present to my mind. To attempt to thank you would be absurd; but should you ever be in such need, may some ministering angel in a human form rush forward as speedily to your assistance!"

Lord Gowrie, very much vexed to find no one had either seemed inclined to console or rejoice with him; with the true demeanour of a sanctified hypocrite, chose to address his Maker in terms so different from the ejaculations of real piety, that the Duke, shocked at what he looked upon as a profanation of religion, turned from him with disgust, while every one else was tempted to laugh at what in any other case might have

have been termed ridiculous expressions. While he was thus employed, the surgeon arrived, and pronounced the Earl out of danger, and likely to recover fast; candidly declaring, he owed his existence solely to the expedition with which the proper methods to recover him had been pursued.

The Viscount having ended his prayers, gave the practitioner a disdainful look, and said, in a sulky tone, "What the Duke di Ferrara ordered must meet with approbation."

While he was speaking, the Earl sighed, as he had done several times before, and then opened his eyes, looked about him, and saw himself surrounded by his friends. Lord Gowrie seized this moment to rise, and seemed ready to devour the hand he held, which he pressed so forcibly, he attracted, as he wished, the old Peer's attention, who looked at him very stedfastly, and then closed his eyes again for a few minutes. The surgeon gave him a cordial he had been preparing, which seemed to be of infinite service to

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to him ; and when he opened his eyes the second time, he was able to say in an audible whisper, " Where am I ? " The Captain of the packet, who was standing at the foot of the bed, with that bluntness, the characteristic of his profession, replied, " You are at Dover, my Lord ; three quarters of an hour ago you were at the bottom of the sea ; but thanks to that nobleman who now supports you, you are once more safe in port ; and by God he ran a greater risk to save you than any man in this town would have done : yet there are few people fonder of money, and Lord Gowrie's was a tempting bribe ; but life is sweet your Lordship I hope now knows by experience."

Lord Gowrie's eyes brightened at this speech, which in his opinion must convince his grandfather how anxious he had been to save him ; therefore instantly rejoined, " I am sure I hardly know what I offered ; but I would freely, at that dreadful moment, have parted with every shilling I possess. Oh ! my Lord, (raising the hand once more to

to his lips) you can't conceive what my sufferings have been; they can only be compared to my present transports."

A disdainful ironical smile almost involuntarily expressed the Duke's contempt of the hypocrite; it did not escape the Earl's notice, who, at all times particularly quick-sighted, easily perceived no one present seemed to put faith in the young man's *transports*; and the Captain, to whom his speech had been in some measure addressed, said, "Why, look ye, my Lord, you must have possessed a much larger fortune than any man ever yet did to have induced me to have made the attempt, though I fancy myself a tolerable swimmer; but, I declare, at one time I would not have given three farthings for the Duke's life, much more the Earl's."

The old Peer had not yet recovered sufficient strength to express his feelings, though he perfectly understood all the Captain said, and seemed sensibly affected by the conclusion. He looked at the Duke, sighed, and

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at last was able to say, "My feelings are much too powerful for utterance, your Grace; I even now shudder to think what might have been the consequence of your generous endeavour to save the life of an old man almost sinking into the grave, and whom you have thus rescued, at the imminent hazard of your own, from the very jaws of death! But for heaven's sake now leave me, and take care of yourself! Mr. Neville, how could you let his Grace remain so long in such a condition?" for the Duke was still just as he had jumped overboard, and had taken off his great coat from finding the warmth of the room rendered it very uncomfortable over his wet shirt. He would fain have prevented the Earl from speaking so long; and when he ceased, answered, "My Lord, I merely followed the dictates of common humanity in trying to save you, and did no more than any other person present would have done had they fancied themselves equally good swimmers. To find my efforts have been crowned with success much more than

than repays me for the trifling fatigue I have undergone. I hope a little rest will quite restore your Lordship, I will therefore take my leave for the present; this gentleman (looking at the surgeon) knows better than I do what to prescribe now."

"Oh! faith your Grace has not done your work by halves," said the surgeon, "you are a most excellent physician: quiet and rest will, as you observe, be of infinite service to *our* patient, whom I should wish to be left alone, that is, under the care of any particular person (his Lordship's own servant for example), that he may try to get a little rest. I will step home; for a composing-draught may assist nature, and promote perspiration."

The Earl hardly attended to what the surgeon said, as he could not take his eyes from the generous preserver of his life, whose animated countenance expressed the pleasure his recovery gave him, and whose naturally fine colour was heightened by the pleasing sensations glowing in his bosom, while his

dark

bark blue eyes beamed with sensibility and delight. The old Peer seemed to gaze upon him with rapturous veneration; and having offered up a short but fervent thanksgiving to the throne of mercy for his own miraculous preservation, entreated the Giver of all goodness to shower down blessings upon the Duke and his offspring.

Lord Gowrie, shocked to find all his pageantry of grief and joy equally unnoticed, by his grandfather, now once more seized his hand, saying, "Let *me* watch over you, my *dear grandfather*, if you *are* to be left to the care of any *one* person:" then, in imitation of Mellifont, and in a tone he wished should appear equally animated, he exclaimed, "May angels guard your slumbers!"

The Earl, neither taken in nor at all flattered by this excess of tenderness, said in a tone the young hypocrite was rather accustomed to, "No more of your *dears*, I request, Gowrie; you see I am, thanks to Heaven and the Duke di Ferrara, alive, and

and once more in possession of my senses, without your being reduced to your last shilling. I shall follow the advice of my noble preserver—therefore let me once more entreat your Grace would leave me; every moment increases my dread that you will be a material sufferer from remaining so long in your wet clothes. But where is your sweet boy? how does he do?”

“Quite well now he is on shore, I dare say, my Lord.”

“Faith,” said the Captain, “I thought the poor little fellow would have gone wild when the Duke jumped into the sea; it required all my strength to hold him, and prevent his plunging in after papa; but I ordered him to be put to bed, your Grace; he was very wet, and seemed to wish it when I told him you would soon join him.”

“I am very much obliged to you, Captain; I will go to him immediately.”

The Earl having been moved into another bed prepared for him in the same room, every one, Lord Gowrie and his Lordship's

valet

valet excepted, left the apartment. Mr. Neville, who had long been very anxious about the Duke, and had given orders to have a shirt of the landlord's aired for him, accompanied his Grace into the room, to which they were informed Alfred had been carried; he was in bed, but not asleep. "Oh! papa," he exclaimed the moment he saw who was coming in, "I thought you would never come! how glad I am to see you! Is poor Lord Melton come to life again? Carlos told me he was."

The Duke confirmed the intelligence: tears stood in the little fellow's eyes at the recollection of the recent events, while he said, "I thought he was quite dead, papa, though you had got him out of the sea. But shall I get up, or will you come to bed too?"

"Why I feel very much inclined to be lazy," said the Duke; "and as I have no clothes to put on, shall have an excellent excuse for giving way to my natural indolence," dispatching his valet for the shirt, and

Carlos for some mulled wine, which Neville strongly recommended.

As soon as the servants were gone, Neville began, "I protest, your Grace, I am as much tempted to blame as to admire the heroic action to which the Earl owes his life; for when I reflect upon the agonies of that sweet fellow, and my own feelings at the moment you disappeared—never, as even those who were much better acquainted with what was likely to have befallen you than myself—never, as they all seemed to think, to rise again. Indeed no one entertained the least hope of your being saved. Gracious God! can any one conceive what a horrid sensation it was for the time?"

"I own it is dreadful, my dear Neville," said the Duke, "to see a fellow-creature in imminent danger without being able to afford him any assistance; and I am very much flattered to find you were so much interested in my fate. I trust my feelings would have been similar to your own in a like situation; but believe me, happy as I
am

am it was in my power to save the Earl, I would not, upon my children's account, have made the attempt if I had not been confident I ran but little risk myself. I knew I was what is called a good swimmer; and as the packet was near, not to mention the two boats, I was persuaded I should be able to reach one or the other. However, without animadverting upon what might appear more rash than it really was, I had a very powerful motive besides common humanity, to induce me to endeavour to save the poor old man; another time I will be more explicit," giving Neville to understand the presence of Alfred prevented him from entering into any farther explanation just then. He therefore went on, "I certainly acted from the impulse of the moment; but I do think, had Lord Gowrie been equally unfortunate, I might have taken a few seconds, if not minutes, more to reflect upon the danger; in which case he would undoubtedly have perished, for I was but just in time to save the Earl."

"Upon my soul," said Neville, "I don't think your Grace has done his tender-hearted grandson a favour as it is."

"I am afraid not; his bombastic expressions of grief and joy confirm me in that opinion."

"I protest I think they were merely assumed to exculpate himself in our eyes," continued Neville; "for upon my honour I think he was, if not purposely, in a great measure accessory to the accident."

"I am perfectly of your opinion. God forgive him if he is guilty, or me if I judge him wrongfully! but as I sat opposite, I had them both perfectly in view; I positively thought—(the Duke paused)—he might at all events have saved the poor old man: however, let us hope he only wanted presence of mind."

"I wish the Earl may not have imbibed a few of my suspicions," said Neville; "he don't seem to treat the stupid being with much cordiality. I don't suppose he would chuse to disclose his thoughts before so many strangers,

strangers, but when he revolves his recent escape in his mind, the result of the scrutiny I apprehend won't prove very favourable to the Viscount."

The return of the Duke's valet with the shirt and wine, prevented his Grace from making any reply; and having had his hair dried, and pulled off his wet things, he threw himself into bed, drank a tumbler of the wine, and declared he found himself very comfortable. As it was the time of day when Italians in general take their *siesta*, or afternoon's nap, the prevalent custom of their country, Neville retired with the servant, in hopes his Grace might feel himself inclined to dose after the fatigue he had undergone.

CHAP. V.

MR. Neville followed the valet into a large dining-room upon the same floor, which had been prepared for his Grace; the windows faced the very spot where they had landed. In passing the door of an adjoining apartment standing half open, he perceived Lord Gowrie pacing with hasty strides; and, offended at his having turned his head as he passed, which was merely owing to the noise the Viscount made, his Lordship flung the unfortunate door to with such vehemence he made the house shake. Very considerate
(thought

(thought Neville as he advanced towards his own fire, for the Earl's apartment was contiguous), and particularly polite; because common civility ought to have made him enquire after the Duke's health. But Lord Gowrie would have found it a very difficult matter at that moment to define his own feelings; had he succeeded according to his wishes, the Earl would by that time have been lying in state.

The old Peer had lost no opportunity since they left Ath to reproach him for his behaviour to little Alfred. Naturally of a malicious spiteful disposition, he had listened in silence to these reproofs, because he did not dare affront the Earl by answering as he felt himself inclined. Their rough passage had rather increased his spleen; and being obliged, much against his will, to move in the boat, had induced him to try to put an end to the vexations and contradictions he continually met with, by sending the ultimate cause of them to seek coral among the Nereides. He therefore, as has been before

observed, allowed the Earl to rise; then taking advantage of the Captain's exclamation, started up himself, and, assisted by the sway of the boat, effectually, as he thought, and without incurring any suspicion, accomplished his purpose, and was secretly applauding his own dexterity at the moment he was offering rewards to the sailors to save his dear grandfather. It may therefore be supposed, that had he expressed his real sentiments, he would have cursed instead of thanked the Duke for his officiousness. At first he hoped his Grace would have fallen a sacrifice to his humanity; but when that expectation ceased, he still consoled himself by thinking it impossible the old Peer should recover: in this he was also disappointed; and from having been for a few minutes Earl of Melton in his own imagination, was once more dwindled into Viscount Gowrie, and as much a dependant as ever upon the old man he had endeavoured to send to heaven. He was therefore angry with himself, the Duke, in short the whole world; and
though

though no one of the party seemed inclined to accuse him of being the cause of the accident, they were none of them, he plainly perceived, the dupes of his affected sorrow.

Notwithstanding the Earl's prohibition, he had remained in the chamber after every body else left it; and had chosen to enter into a long detail respecting the old gentleman's late accident, how it happened, the result, &c. endeavouring as much as possible to lessen the merit of the Duke's truly magnanimous action, till the old Peer, tired of listening to him, and not sufficiently recovered to enter into a debate upon the subject, ordered him to quit the room, as he was inclined to sleep. The Viscount dared not disobey; and, as most guilty people do, he began to dread the Earl entertained some suspicions of his kind intentions. He had just begun to pace his room as Mr. Neville passed his door; and as he was among the number of officious people he had been sending to the regions below, his rude behaviour is easily accounted for. He in par-

ticular vowed vengeance against the Captain of the packet for having, as he had assured the Earl, very much magnified the danger the Duke was in; and he now foresaw other enquiries might take place, though convinced no one could bring the charge home to himself, as he had not even laid a finger upon his grandfather.

Pride, ostentation, and avarice were the Earl's predominant failings; yet he could distinguish merit in any situation, and was ever ready to reward it: was by no means deficient in point of feeling when neither his dignity nor his purse were concerned. And his pride had never been more gratified than in the present instance, when he came to reflect upon what the Captain had said, to think he owed his existence to one of the first men in Europe, whose humanity had induced him to risk his own life to rescue him from a watery grave, when no one else, for the largest bribe that could have been offered, would even make the attempt; and this hero, for such he now thought the Duke, was not
a wild

a wild mad-brained young fellow, who might have done such a thing through folly, unconscious of his danger, or merely to raise his reputation. The Duke was, as he presumed; a married man; might have, nay had given him reason to suppose he had, more children besides the one he had with him; and the very circumstance of that one would have prevented a less humane man from quitting the boat. The Duke had declared he was, nay had proved himself, an expert swimmer; but that by no means diminished his sense of so extraordinary an obligation: and as most people, more or less, judge every body after their own hearts, the Earl asked himself very seriously whether, had their situations been reversed, he would have done as much for the Duke? Conscience answered in the negative. This reflection brought up a train of others not of the most pleasing nature, as they were by no means exempt from self-reproach. What the Duke had said at Ath respecting the St. Severino family came next across him; nor was this

the first time it had obtruded itself upon his memory, notwithstanding his endeavours to banish the subject. He now discovered by experience that nothing reminds a man so much of his duty in this world, as an unexpected summons to appear before that awful tribunal where we must all, sooner or later, account for our actions, and receive judgment accordingly. The Earl was but too conscious he had many errors, if not crimes, to expiate before he passed that "dreadful bourne;" and shuddered when he reflected how near he was being

"Cut off even in the blossoms of his sin,

"Unhousell'd, unanointed, unanneal'd ;

"No reckoning made, but sent to his account

"With all his imperfections on his head !"

He determined therefore, from this serious warning, to make all the reparation in his power for some actions which he could not at such a moment even palliate to his own satisfaction : but pride, the origin of all his errors, again assumed its sway ; and as he felt "the life-blood mantle round his heart,"

heart," it made him come to a resolution not to lower himself if possible in the eyes of his noble-minded preserver: no—he would endeavour to satisfy his curiosity without explaining his motives to the Duke.

While he was devising schemes for that purpose, Mr. Neville called for pen, ink, and paper, and sat down to write to Lord Fortrose an account of his arrival in England, and every thing that had occurred since his meeting with the Duke at Halle, meaning to send his letter by express, in case his Lordship should not be in London, to hasten him to town; knowing how anxious his father was to shew his expected guest every mark of respect.

As it may, perhaps, be necessary to account in some measure for the intimacy that reigned between the Duke and Lord Fortrose, which had led Mr. Neville to conjecture who he was addressing at Halle, and to introduce himself to his Grace, we must take a few retrograde steps. About three years before this history commences, Lord Fortrose,

Fortrose, not having been very well for some months, was ordered to spend the winter in a warmer climate; and as he preferred Naples to Lisbon, thither he bent his course, having appointed Mr. Neville, who was then at college, to meet him the ensuing spring at Paris, from whence the latter proceeded upon the tour he was now returning from. Lord Fortrose found great benefit from his journey and change of air; and having long wished to see Sicily and Malta, seized this favourable opportunity to gratify his curiosity: chance led him to Trapani, where, owing to a bad cold he had caught during his passage, he was confined for some days at a miserable inn. By mere accident the Duke di Ferrara, who was then at his villa near that town, learned an English nobleman was at Trapani, and indisposed. Such an intimation strongly excited his compassion: he therefore instantly waited upon his Lordship, introduced himself without any ceremony, and with that genuine hospitality, the result of real benevolence, made him accompany him

him home, where he introduced him to his Duchess then living, who, as well as his Grace, did all in her power to make their truly magnificent abode agreeable to his Lordship. Alfred, then about two years old, contributed not a little towards his amusement. The Duke's second son was not more than three months old.

As soon as his Lordship was sufficiently recovered, the Duke made the tour of the island with him, introduced him to all the first nobility both at Messina and Palermo, then took him in his yacht to Malta, where, owing to his companion's rank, he met with a most polite reception from the Grand Master, &c. They next visited the islands of Lipari—in short every thing worth seeing in that part of the world: and as the Duke expressed much pleasure in his Lordship's society, who, like himself, was an exceeding good man, and equally *sans ceremonie* and *sans pretensions*, the Duchess and his Grace returned with him to Naples, where they chiefly resided, and forced him

to take up his abode at the Palazzo di Ferrara. Each party saw the spring draw near with regret ; and as the Duke was going into Lombardy, he accompanied his Lordship as far as Florence upon his journey home. All the return the Viscount could make for such almost unexampled distinctions to a total stranger, was to express a hope, when he took leave of his Grace, he would one day or other visit England, and of course honour him so far as to become his guest. The Duke declared it had long been his intention, and promised to make his Lordship's house his home during his residence in Great Britain; and thus they parted. It may therefore be supposed Lord Fortrose bestowed the warmest eulogiums upon the Duke di Ferrara when he mentioned him to his son ; and had he not thought it would have been a sort of encroachment upon his Grace's goodness, would certainly have immediately recommended Mr. Neville to his notice ; but the news of the Duchess's death, which he learned through the medium
of

of the English Envoy resident at Naples, which melancholy event, in giving birth to a daughter, who did not survive her mother, took place within twelve months after he had quitted that city. This information made him decline all hopes of seeing his Grace in England, at least during his mourning, and effectually prevented him from writing to him through the medium of his son, convinced the Duke was not in a frame of mind to enjoy the society of strangers. Though in habits of correspondence with the Duke himself, with whom he had sincerely condoled upon his recent loss, he carried his delicacy so far as to desire Mr. Neville would neither visit Naples nor Sicily during his present tour, as, should the Duke (which he still seemed inclined to do) at some future period visit England, he could return with him, and thus see both to great advantage.

The Duke, who was particularly fond of his children, could not bear the thought of leaving them; but knowing his youngest son

son would be taken as much care of as under his own eyes, by the relation he mentioned to Mr. Neville, and thinking his eldest able to undertake such a journey, having been particularly pressed by the Viscount to make him his travelling companion; he apprized his Lordship of his intended visit, left Naples with his little Alfred in February, crossed the Tyrol into Germany, and reached Halle as has been already related.

Neville having taken his seat near the window next the apartment occupied by Lord Gowrie, soon began to throw the various incidents he wished to communicate to Lord Fortrose upon paper, though Lord Gowrie's heavy steps often deranged the thread of his ideas, as they shook both rooms; indeed the partition that separated them was so slight, he soon found, without taking the trouble to listen, it was next to an impossibility to avoid hearing all that passed in the adjoining apartment. The Viscount, however, continued to vent his fury upon the boards, and Mr. Neville went on with his letter,

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letter, till he was absolutely obliged to lay down his pen in consequence of the following dialogue, which he could not help attending to, as Lord Gowrie spoke almost as loud as he stamped, in a very haughty, or more properly, impudent tone:—"Itell you, Captain Mellifont, my mind is too much occupied about my grandfather to allow me to attend to empty forms;—those who can stand upon ceremony at such a time as this, can't possess common feeling: if they are offended, so let them; you may make your own enquiries; I am not so interested about a total stranger, who, let the worst that can befall him, is merely likely to catch a trifling cold, and that he might have prevented by changing his clothes as soon as he came in."

"And so have left the Earl to perish, my Lord; for pray who else knew either what to order, or even to do? However, if you are really so little sensible of what his Grace has done, I don't envy you your refined feelings," said Mellifont.

"Oh!

"Oh! you are, no doubt, much obliged to the Duke, Captain," drawled out Lord Gowrie in a spiteful tone; "for had the Earl been drowned, he would probably have died without a will; so try and seize this favourable moment to induce him to make one in your favour."

"We are related, my Lord," said the Captain, "else—: but upon my soul I despise such mean insinuations too much as it is, to think them worthy an answer. I shall only hint to your Lordship, and would advise you to mark my words, that when you do inherit the title and estates of the Earl of Melton, I hope it will be by fair means. Am I sufficiently explicit, Lord Gowrie?" finding conscious guilt tied the culprit's tongue, who at last stammered out, "I really don't understand you, Captain, and shan't puzzle my brains to discover your meaning."

"Only bear it constantly in mind, my Lord; and take care you don't oblige me to repeat my admonitions;" leaving the room as he concluded, and knocking at Neville's door,

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door, who found all his latent suspicions now fully confirmed. He instantly desired him to walk in; and Mellifont, having excused himself for disturbing him, perceiving he was writing, which Neville entreated he would not mention, he made his enquiries after the Duke in the politest and most feeling manner, then expressed his gratitude in language that did the utmost honour to his heart. Neville joined with him in hoping the Duke would be no material sufferer from his generous action; and having made a few general remarks relative to the late events, the Captain took his leave, saying he should take the liberty of renewing his thanks and enquiries as soon as the Duke was stirring; and to avoid a *tête-à-tête* with his amiable cousin, he strolled out upon the beach, and proceeded thence to the pier, where he saw the carriages and baggage landed.

Neville could not bring his letter into so small a compass as he wished: however, presuming the bustle and noise by bringing in the baggage

baggage occasioned in the house, must disturb the Duke, he hastened to conclude, promising to enter into farther details when Lord Fortrose and he met; and had scarcely finished and delivered it to his servant with orders to forward it by an express, when, to his utter astonishment, he heard the voice of the Earl in the next room.

Lord Gowrie had been effectually quieted by Mellifont's hints, and sat revolving various plans how to prevent him from communicating the suspicions, he evidently entertained, to the Earl; and had come to a resolution never to leave them together if he could possibly avoid it. He was quite taken by surprise when the old Peer joined him, though he immediately fell into his old strain, made a thousand enquiries in a breath, was overjoyed to see the Earl look so well, and seem so much recovered; but all his expressions of rapture were checked by the old man's asking, without seeming to have noticed them, "Where is Mellifont?"

"I have

"I have not seen him for this hour or more, my Lord: I presume he is rambling about somewhere; he went out I know; for my own part I——"

"Why you staid at home," said the Earl, finishing his period.

Neville enjoyed the interruption; but in three seconds Mellifont joined them, followed by a waiter bringing in a bason of soup which he had ordered to be got ready; having accidentally, on his return from his walk, seen the Earl's valet, who had come down to get a change of clothes for his Lord, and by this means learned the o'd man was going to rise. Thinking he must want some nourishment, and understanding nothing had been ordered, he had taken upon himself to prescribe for him.

The Earl, who was flattered by this kind mark of attention, and knew it proceeded entirely from the interest the Captain took in his health, in answer to his enquiries, called him his dear Mellifont, and told him he had risen sooner than he had at first intended,

intended, as he could not rest till he had returned his thanks to the Duke rather more coherently than he had yet been able; and as he meant to retire early, he was sure a good night's rest would enable him to pursue his journey the next day. "I understand," he went on, "the Duke is gone to bed; so his valet told Mason. Have you seen his Grace, Mellifont, since he left my room?"

"No, my Lord," was the answer: "but I made enquiries respecting his health of Mr. Nevillè about an hour ago, and am happy to inform you he left both his Grace and his lovely boy in very good spirits, and is in hopes they have both fallen asleep."

"I wish he may be right in his conjectures; for I am sure the Duke must have been very much fatigued, though he did not chuse to complain."

As his Lordship ceased speaking, the landlord, a very clever man, whom the Earl had known before, came in to pay his respects, and congratulate his Lordship upon his

his speedy recovery. "Why, thanks to the Duke di Ferrara, landlord, I am able to tell you your soup is very good."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, my Lord, and rejoice very sincerely to see you so well recovered; for, as the surgeon observed, if his Grace had not been as good a physician as he is a swimmer, his first astonishing effort would have been useless; for he was convinced he should have been too late to have been of any service,"

"I ordered him to be sent for the moment we were on shore," said Lord Gowrie.

"Very true, my Lord, but he did not happen to be at home; it was therefore near half an hour before he arrived, and even moments are precious, as he observed, in such cases," continued the landlord.

"I could not help his being out of the way," said the Viscount; "I am very happy the Duke understood what to do, and still more so that he succeeded so well; but there are so many different methods, it is difficult

difficult to know which is the right : I own I was afraid."

"Well, well," said the Earl pettishly, "I can conceive what your fears were, Gowrie ; and I am perfectly sensible to whom I owe my life." The landlord left the room, and the Earl said, addressing Melifont, "Did you perceive exactly how my accident happened, Captain, or what occasioned my fall?"

"I can't say my eyes were at that moment upon your Lordship."

"Then I am afraid I shall never be satisfied," said the Earl, in a tone as much as to say, "I find you don't chuse to tell me."

"Allow *me* to explain the matter to your Lordship," said the Viscount ;—"when we talked of changing places, I was going to rise to let you slip into mine ; but perceiving a large wave coming, I stopped to let it pass, during which time, not being aware of the danger, you got up, and I, hoping to be in time to secure you my place, was rising at the moment the wave dashed against the side of

of the boat; by this means you knocked me down before I could get hold of you, and as the boat rebounded back again after the wave had passed, you fell backwards over the side, before I could recover myself to save you."

"So, so," said the Earl, very drily; "and pray where did your Lordship fall to?"

"I saved myself upon the seat I rose from, my Lord; but—"

"I hope you received no material hurt from the knock-down blow I gave you? I really was unconscious of what I did; and now entreat your pardon; it was very fortunate you were not an equal sufferer with myself; as for me, it is no matter how soon I am out of the world."

Neville saw the old Peer's face in imagination while he went on in this ironical strain. Lord Gowrie was very much confused, and very much at a loss what to say: he stammered out a few incoherent phrases,

then wondered how the Earl could make a joke of so serious a matter."

"Why it would have been no bad joke for you, Gowrie," said the Earl; "I dare say you think yourself perfectly capable of doing honour both to my title and fortune; an old man more or less could not have been of much consequence; and I am convinced you would have supplied my place in the senate so ably, I should not even have been missed."

"I only hope I shall not be called upon for that purpose these twenty years at least, my Lord," said the Viscount; and so little do I covet your title and estates, I had rather precede than follow you to the grave."

"Indeed," said the Earl, "if I was not blessed with either eyes or ears, or had been deprived of my feeling at the time I fell into the sea, I might give you credit for such a speech; though, admitting it to be true, it would merely convince me of the weakness of your intellect:—but I am not your dupe, Lord Gowrie; and you ought to remember you were not the only person in the boat.

If

If I wrong you in either thought, word, or deed, may the sin fall upon my aged head! But, Mellifont, tell me truly, as you value my friendship, tell me, upon your honour, which I know you would not forfeit, how my accident happened; and whether the Duke plunged into the sea (which Lord Gowrie, assured me he did, after you all left the room) at his particular request, and only to prevent him, in the excess of his grief, from jumping overboard after me?"

"Your first question, my Lord," replied Mellifont, "I have already answered as nearly as I can with truth; at such a moment my senses were not sufficiently about me to enable me to be as explicit as the Viscount; he has, no doubt, accounted for the accident as it really happened, and was certainly not aware of the consequence when he rose to give you his place. But with regard to your second question, I can't do the Duke di Ferrara the base injustice to confirm his Lordship's assertions with respect to the motive which induced his Grace

to hazard his life to save your's, my Lord : I don't recollect, but I may not be accurate in that respect, that the Viscount even addressed the Duke ; and his proffered bribe to such a man must have appeared an insult. But I firmly believe at the moment the Duke's feelings were too much awake to allow him to attend to what any one said ; every one in the boat agreed they had not the slightest conception of what the Duke's intentions were when he threw off his clothes ; consternation seemed to have tied every body's tongue, or they would have endeavoured, as they aver, to have dissuaded him from what they looked upon must be followed by certain death. The only word I heard him say before he plunged into the sea, was, in Italian, 'Oh my God!' And had your Lordship been an eye-witness, as I was, of the surprising exertions he made to reach you—how often the waves repelled his generous efforts—and when your Lordship sunk, as we all supposed for the third and last time, he certainly dived after you, as we lost sight

fight of him for several seconds; but, to our inexpressible joy, when he once more rose, he did not come alone; and I solemnly believe he would have lost his life rather than not have succeeded in his attempt. With the utmost difficulty we got to his assistance; and I am certain he could not have supported himself against the fury of the waves many minutes longer without abandoning your Lordship; and I am convinced he would not have done that till the last moment, if at all. He appeared very much exhausted when he got into the boat again; but the fears he still entertained for your life, seemed to give him fresh vigour and spirits. It would be needless to recapitulate the various efforts, seconded by his valet, who seems a very good surgeon, the Duke made to recover your Lordship: it was his Grace brought you on shore, my Lord, and it was he who gave every necessary order till the surgeon arrived."

Mellifont paused; and, as Neville supposed from the silence which ensued, the

Earl fixed his piercing eyes upon the culprit for some time before he spoke ; then broke forth—"Thou boasting deceitful wretch ! thou basest of all mortals ! did you suppose your paltry insinuations had any weight with me when you uttered them ? did you think I imagined the Duke would have been more anxious to have saved your life than mine ? or that your entreaties could have any more weight than your boasted bribe with the noble fellow ? And because the Captain said he with difficulty restrained the Duke's lovely cherub from following his beloved father, you wanted to persuade me you were also prevented from jumping overboard by main force : Two people held you : was you one Mellifont ? I won't desire you to answer my question.—I did not want this fresh proof of your envious gravelling disposition, Gowrie ; had you felt half the prodigious affection for me you are for ever talking about, your heart, like that of Mellifont's, would have glowed with gratitude towards the Duke di Ferrara ; instead of which, you

you meanly sought to lower the most noble, most generous, most disinterested act of humanity that was ever performed. How truly may I look upon his Grace as my guardian angel; and how sincerely do I re-pine I am reduced to mere words to convince him of my gratitude! Yes," (beginning to pace the room, though very gently while he spoke) "yes, I have now, Mellifont, the picture you have drawn of the danger he exposed himself to before my eyes; and when I look towards the still roaring sea, can see him struggling to support an old man who has merely his prayers and blessings to offer in return for the risk he ran of sinking in the attempt a martyr to his humanity. Generous, noble fellow! you are an honour to your family, your country, nay, to the world! I find the danger was even greater than I could have supposed; since men who spend their lives upon the sea, and acknowledged themselves to be good swimmers, would have suffered me to perish, notwithstanding a sum which would

have placed them above want, was held forth as a temptation to induce them to venture their lives."

"I only wish I had fallen overboard instead of you, my Lord," said the Viscount, in a glouting whimpering tone, "and gone at once to the bottom; death would have been preferable to such repeated marks of your displeasure."

"If you think to deprecate my just anger by such childish nonsense, Lord Gowrie, why, give me leave to tell you, you are very much mistaken. You have no doubt long thought me in the way; for if you had no intention to fling me overboard, at least I am convinced you did not try to save me; and you were the only one who had it in his power. Gowrie, I speak my real thoughts, when I tell you I am afraid you are a villain!"

The entrance of a servant, who came to inform Neville, according to his orders, that the Duke's valet was gone into his master's room, put a stop to the Earl's discourse; for though he did not regard speaking his sentiments

ments before Mellifont, he did not wish to publish them to the world in general; and he overheard so plainly every word the servant said, that he reflected it was possible his own words might have reached the ear of Neville, though the latter did not answer the man till he arrived at the other extremity of his room, to avoid giving the Earl reason to suppose he had been attending to the reproaches, in his opinion, so properly bestowed upon his grandson:—by this means he lost Lord Gowrie's reply to this serious well-founded accusation; indeed he was more anxious to join the Duke than listen to the conclusion of the dispute.

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 Lord Gower's reply to this serious well-

THE Duke's hair was dressing when
 Neville entered; he told him Alfred and
 himself had taken a long nap. Neville was
 exceedingly glad they had not been dis-
 turbed, which he owned he was afraid would
 have been the case. “Why I am so much
 accustomed to sleep about this time,” said
 the Duke, “it is become habitual; and
 not having enjoyed a comfortable night's
 rest for some time, added to the short visit
 I paid the watery god, was all in my favour,
 and I positively find myself very much
 refreshed;

refreshed : Alfred you see is quite gay, and likes England excessively he assures me."

Neville was very happy to see them both in such spirits, and proceeded to tell the Duke in German, which he knew the valet did not understand, how highly he had been amused, and repeated nearly word for word the discourse he had overheard, which he protested lost half its zest in the translation. The Duke laughed heartily, and observed he should have been surprised if the Earl had not had some suspicions to whom he owed his fall; and acknowledged he no longer scrupled to pronounce the Viscount guilty. His Grace then declared he was very hungry, that Alfred was troubled with a similar complaint, and asked Neville if he had given orders about dinner? He said he had been so busy writing and listening, he had never once thought of eating; besides, not knowing what time his Grace would wake, he should have been at a loss as to the hour of dining, but would instantly repair his omission. "Nelson has just done,"

said

said the Duke, "therefore he shall give orders for whatever the house affords that can be soon got ready." In a few minutes the valet was sent upon this errand, and the Duke, Neville, and Alfred adjourned into the saloon.

The conversation in the next room was now carried on in too low a tone for them to understand what passed, had the Duke been inclined to attend, which was far from being the case. He immediately walked to the farthest window, and began to praise the prospect it afforded, declaring few sights were, in his opinion, more majestic and sublime than a fine view of the sea. He already felt the comfort of an English inn, therefore should not drag his bed any farther; it might wait his return at Dover, as he found it would be an useless incumbrance during his travels in Great Britain.

The Earl, who soon distinguished the Duke's voice, in a few minutes knocked at the door: having heard one very near them open a moment before, his Grace guessed who it

it was, and advanced to meet him, while he called out, "Come in." His Lordship instantly made his appearance, and in spite of the Duke's endeavours to stop him, renewed his thanks in the strongest terms the English language afforded, while tears, the absolute and almost involuntary tribute of gratitude, rolled down his cheeks; he then embraced Alfred with true paternal affection. "I am afraid you don't like me so well now as you did at Ath, my dear little fellow? Yet you don't know how sorry I was when I heard papa had jumped into the water after me, and frightened you so terribly."

"Indeed, my Lord, I am very glad you are not drowned," said Alfred; "I cried when I thought you was dead."

"I can assure your Lordship," said the Duke, smiling, "his first question after I joined him was how you did?"

"Sweet love!" said the old Peer, pressing him to his bosom, "you inherit all your brave father's humanity. But I had a
second

second motive which induced me to intrude thus early upon your Grace; I came to entreat you, my young favourite, and Mr. Neville would do my grandsons and me the honour to dine with us; our meal will very soon be ready, and I have taken the liberty of preventing any preparations being made for your's in hopes of enjoying your Grace's company."

The Duke assured the old Peer he could not have made him a more agreeable proposal. The Earl felt particularly pleased at this unceremonious acquiescence with his invitation. They adjourned to the next apartment, where the cloth was laid. Melisfont seemed very much pleased their party had received such an addition; and the Viscount tried to be polite, though conscious guilt, and his recent disappointment, soon made him relapse into his accustomed silence when out of temper, or afraid of displeasing the Earl. In a few minutes they sat down to dinner, and every one but Lord Gowrie did the utmost honour to the repast.

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He saw, with increasing uneasiness, this growing intimacy between the Duke and the Earl, and grudged every shilling the latter seemed so anxious to lavish upon the former. As his Lordship understood the Duke meant to take up his abode with Lord Fortrose both in town and country during his stay in England, he could not entreat him to become his guest, but merely hoped if (as he presumed he would before his return) he should make the tour of Great Britain, he would spend at least a few days at Melton Abbey, in Rutlandshire. The Duke assured him he would; and tried as much as possible to prevent the old Peer from reverting to the events of the morning, by starting politics, and various subjects very remote from the one nearest the Earl's heart.

Having made pretty free with some excellent claret, coffee was ordered in the next room, which, being larger, the Earl observed would allow Alfred freer scope to run about, and they soon seated themselves round the fire. The Earl called for *liqueurs* after

after their coffee, as he wished for a flow of spirits to begin his projected attack upon the Duke; tasted two or three forts, turning the conversation upon Sicilian customs and manners, the celebrated feast of St. Rosalia, &c.; then, with affected unconcern, said, looking at Alfred, who was jumping about in high glee, "Your son bears an English name, your Grace."

"True, my Lord," said the Duke with a half smile, "he was christened Alfred Ferdinand Rinaldo; as we Sicilians are most of us of Spanish extraction, we conform to many of their customs, particularly in giving our children a variety of names."

The Earl paused for a moment:—"In England noblemen's, and indeed gentlemen's, eldest sons are generally named after their father; is that a prevalent fashion in Sicily, your Grace?"

"Upon my word it is a remark I never made, my Lord. We have an amazing number of Rosalies among our females, and of Ferdinands among our males, from the
one

one being the name of the patroness, or tutelary saint of our island, the other the name of our Monarch."

Still the Earl did not seem satisfied; but unable to dwell any longer upon a subject from which he had hoped to derive some material information, said, "I am afraid your Grace will think me both curious and impertinent, but nearly related as you no doubt were to the St. Severino family, may I venture to make a few enquiries about some part of it with whom I was in some respects nearly connected?"

Notwithstanding the exhilarating draughts the Earl had been taking, his voice faltered during this request, and the Duke's colour visibly heightened. Both seemed confused. Mellifont looked at Neville, as if for a solution of his Grace's visible embarrassment; but equally at a loss to account for it, he waited with no small degree of curiosity for the explanation of this apparent mystery. Lord Gowrie was too much absorbed in his own reflections to attend to the countenances of

of those around him ; and the Duke, as if to prevent the Earl from proceeding, almost instantly said, " I shall be happy to give your Lordship all the information in my power concerning any part of the St. Severino family. The old Duke," he went on, "(father of Count Mondovi) and his two eldest sons were unfortunately among the number of those who perished during the earthquake in 1783 ; the third son was a Commander of Malta, and died some time before the melancholy event. As neither of the brothers left any issue, the title and estates of course fell to the share of Count Mondovi, from whom they devolved to me."

"Neville and Mellifont thought this summary account perfectly calculated to satisfy the old Peer, yet it did not seem to have the effect. The Earl had told the Duke he was nearly connected with that family, a circumstance his Grace appeared to be unacquainted with. This, if possible, redoubled his curiosity : he began, " I presume, for
very

very just reasons, no doubt, your Grace never heard, was never informed I mean, who Count Mondovi's daughter married?" A deep sigh issued from his bosom;—he proceeded—"The Count, or rather the late Duke, like myself, was too, too inflexible I am afraid. I had a son who might have proved a comfort to my old age, who was once the pride and darling of my heart. The name of your Grace's son reminded me of my own loss, and still more strongly of my injustice. I know I ought ere this to have sought my son, have acknowledged my errors, and implored his forgiveness; for he was all the fondest parent could have wished, till an unfortunate attachment estranged him from his country, friends, and father. Pardon the garrulity of an old man, your Grace; and let me entreat you would inform me, if you can give me that satisfaction, what is become of the object of my enquiry? His name was Alfred St. Aubins."

The young Alfred, having tired himself at play, and now sitting upon his father's knee,
looked

looked very stedfastly at the Earl, who had pronounced the name of his son with no small degree of energy; and before his Grace could make any reply, exclaimed, "Why, papa, Alfred St. Aubins was grand-papa's name; that was why I was called Alfred, you know."

The Earl gave a sudden start, and fixed his eyes upon the innocent prattler, then on the Duke, while his countenance forcibly expressed the various sensations the child's speech had given rise to in his bosom. His Grace remained silent, whilst his looks confirmed the truth of the discovery Alfred had made. Neville and Mellifont were in some respects prepared for something extraordinary; but this far surpassed their expectations.

Lord Gowrie, from not having been attending to what was passing, and from having, by way of silencing the repeated twinges of that disagreeable monitor we all carry about us, made rather too free with the bottle, was at a loss to comprehend whence
5 proceeded

proceeded the evident astonishment that seemed to prevail. He gave a vacant unmeaning stare around him. A total silence reigned for a minute or more ; no one knew what to say, till the Earl, in the utmost agitation, exclaimed, " May I presume to hope, your Grace, I see a great-grandchild in that lovely boy ? You doubtless married a daughter of my unfortunate son's, and must have long, nay I am afraid still condemn his father for his behaviour towards him. The tears which now gushed from the old man's eyes, for a time choaked his utterance : at last he was able to enquire, " Does my beloved Alfred still live ? Am I still blessed with a son ? Have you saved my eye to receive his forgiveness ? "

The Duke made no reply, which put an effectual check to the rising hope the Earl began to entertain, and made him give way to the overflowings of his heart. While he paid this just tribute to the memory of his son he had such reason to lament, he found self-reproach to be the most bitter of all

all sensations. The Duke was also sensibly affected, and could no longer conceal his emotion. Alfred, who was still sitting upon his knee, gazed round him with surprise, unconscious of having been the occasion of the Earl's grief; he then looked at his father, and saw he was unable to disperse the sympathetic drops that would find their way down his cheek: he therefore flung his arms round his neck, and wept also; then raising his head, kissed the tears from the Duke's cheek, saying, "What is the matter, papa?"

"Go and kiss that gentleman," said the Duke, "he is also your grand-papa."

Alfred looked at the Earl, and slipped from his father's knee to obey. The old Peer caught him in his arms as he advanced, and almost stifled him with his caresses: the child returned his embrace, knelt upon the old man's knees, questioning, "How came you to be my grand-papa?—but don't cry any more."

"Heaven

“Heaven bless you, my sweet prattler!” said the Earl; “I can no longer wonder, your Grace, since your own heart must have taught you to despise and condemn my conduct, did not chuse to let me know how nearly I was related to this charming boy; for I presume you knew Alfred St. Aubyn was my son. But did he leave any other children besides your wife?”

A look he received from Neville at that moment, once more silenced the old Peer, as it indicated that the Duchess was no more. His Grace, who now sincerely pitied him, and wished to relieve him at once from his present state of suspense, said, “My late wife, my Lord, was sole heiress of the Ferrara family; the title I now bear was bestowed upon me at her request by our most generous monarch. I am the only son of the one you now so feelingly deplore, and of Victorina di Mondovi.”

Conscious shame overwhelmed the Earl, convinced his grandson, for whom he already felt the most tender affection (which superior

rank we will allow might increase) did not wish to acknowledge their relationship, and most likely sincerely despised him for his conduct towards his father, which he found himself very unable to excuse. His unpollite behaviour at Ath he endeavoured to account for; but he found he had now a much more difficult task to perform. The Duke was every way so much his superior, he could not bear the thoughts of not being reconciled to him, and was sensible he ought to make the first advances: he therefore took the Duke's hand, while his looks expressed compunction for the past more forcibly than any words could have done. His Grace, quite softened in his favour, rose and met his embrace; then said, "We will now, with your permission, my Lord, only look forward: from this moment the past is obliterated from my memory; pray introduce me to my relations."

The Earl was unable to speak: at last, still struggling to conquer his emotion, he said, "My happiness is already more than half

half complete, thus kindly to wish my errors consigned to oblivion. But I have done, your Grace ; I see I distress you ;"—introducing the Duke to his two grandsons.

Lord Gowrie with difficulty concealed his chagrin : finding this foreigner, so near "a rival to the throne," was almost more than he could bear ; to be sure he could not dispute the title with him, but he had every prospect of being a considerable loser by this discovery :—noblemen and gentlemen had cut their heirs off with a shilling ; and he began seriously to dread such a death-blow to all his future hopes and prospects. To express any thing like satisfaction upon the occasion would have been utterly impossible ; a silent bow was therefore all that passed between him and the Duke. Mellifont's countenance expressed the pleasure he felt when the Duke assured him he was very happy he had found two cousins, though he did not look at the most consequential one when he spoke. Neville congratulated the Earl upon this happy event ; adding, with a smile, he

no longer wondered he had taken the Duke for an Englishman.

In a short time Alfred retired; and as the Earl seemed very anxious to know more about this now favoured grandson, the Duke, thinking his curiosity very natural, and assured the poor old man only wished it was in his power to atone for his former want of feeling, thus addressed him—"As there are many things your Lordship no doubt is desirous to be made acquainted with, I will, with your permission, briefly recapitulate the past events of my life."

"Your Grace can't do me a greater favour," replied the Earl.

The Duke began. "My late father, I was informed, came to Naples upon some political business about seven-and-twenty years ago; took a trip into Sicily, and at Palermo was accidentally introduced to my mother, only daughter of Count Mondovi, at that time a Colonel in the Austrian service, and fourth son to the Duke di St. Severino, one of the first noblemen in the island.

island. Mutual love induced my parents to unite their fate, though each was under other engagements—my mother to Prince Antonini, who was old enough to be her grandfather—my father; but I need not expatiate upon what your Lordship is much better acquainted with than myself, nor need I dwell upon the consequences of this perhaps rash union. Equally dependant on their fathers, who were at the time both equally incensed, it would be difficult to say to what inconveniences they might have been reduced, if a very distant relation of my mother's, who had been remarkably fond of her from her infancy, had not offered them an asylum in her house; and with a generosity almost unequalled, shared her small income with the young couple, and even went so far as to assure them she would make them her heirs at her death. Under her friendly roof I was born; and this event fortunately brought about a sort of half reconciliation between Count Mondovi and my parents, though the Duke, his father, remained inflexible.

flexible. However, to oblige the Count, I was brought up a Catholic, and placed entirely under his care. In return, he settled a small annuity, just sufficient to place them above want, upon my father and mother, who continued to reside with Signora Leontini, the lady I have already mentioned. I was early sent to a college in Germany; and before I was fourteen, I entered into the Imperial service as cadet in my grandfather's regiment. My mother's death, which happened soon after, increased the attachment the Count had ever displayed for me; he had but little in his power, but all he had to give fell to my share: and he had often, but in vain, tried to prevail upon the Duke his father to make for me some permanent provision. It would be useless to recapitulate the few frivolous uninteresting events which occurred during my youth. My father, from being habituated to the climate, and particularly attached to Signora Leontini, resided constantly with her even after my mother's death. I visited him regularly
once,

once, and sometimes twice, a year, else I spent most part of my time at Vienna; and soon had the misfortune to perceive a sort of languor (the Signora and myself at first attributed it to grief, and hoped it would in time wear off) gradually increasing, and evidently undermining his constitution. Knowing that I was in every respect totally dependant upon the Count, who might, should I chance to disoblige him, leave me to subsist upon the scanty pay of a Lieutenant in the Austrian service, greatly increased the depression of spirits he laboured under."

The Earl gave an involuntary groan, as he well remembered at the time the Duke alluded to, his unfortunate son had made a last effort to soften his resentment; far more, as he then wrote him word, upon his child's account than his own. The Duke affected not to notice his emotion, and proceeded with his narrative.—"Change of air was recommended to my father; and Count Mondovi advised him to spend the ensuing summer at Aix la Chapelle. A present he received from an

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unknown

unknown hand, but which he afterwards traced to the lady to whom he was in some respects engaged before he left England, enabled him to undertake the journey. The following year my great-grandfather and two great-uncles perished during the earthquakes in Sicily, and Count Mondovi succeeded to the title and estates; and let me with gratitude declare, from that moment he made me totally independent, settled the seat from which he derived his former title instantly upon me, by which means I became Count Mondovi, and presented me to our Monarch and the Emperor as his heir, the future Duke di St. Severino, which title I should of course have inherited in my mother's right at his death. My now brilliant prospects certainly prolonged my father's life. Suffice it to say, with my grandfather's approbation, about six years ago, I married the Duchess di Ferrara, whose ancient title, which at her death would have devolved to the heirs of the St. Severino family, was prematurely (if I may use the expression, as it

it would have been mine or my son's in due course of time) bestowed upon me by Ferdinand the Fourth; and, at her request, I quitted the Austrian, and entered the Neapolitan service. My father survived my marriage about two years; he constantly resided with me, and I had the supreme pleasure of knowing, that from the time I became my own master, he was perfectly happy. My grandfather also paid the debt of nature within the twelvemonth; and from the circumstance I have already mentioned, his title devolved to my eldest son. I am now six-and-twenty, a General in the service of the King of Naples, and am blessed with two sons, one of whom your Lordship is already acquainted with, the other, who is just turned of three years, I have left in Sicily. I have now, I believe, brought my narrative down to the present moment, except having accounted for my journey to England, which I own I have long wished to visit. Lord Fortrose and myself accidentally met in Sicily; and his Lordship, with whom I

H 5

have

have ever since corresponded, and for whom I have the highest esteem, pressed me so kindly to cross the British channel, I readily complied with his wishes; and it affords me inexpressible satisfaction that a chain of unforeseen events has introduced me to so many relations; and I sincerely hope your Lordship's next excursion to the Continent will be to visit me either in Sicily or at Naples."

"Your Grace may depend upon seeing me," said the Earl, "if it pleases God to spare my life a twelvemonth longer. But I hope you mean to make some stay in England;—believe me I only wish (though conscious it can never be in my power) to make amends in some shape or other for my shameful neglect of you during your infancy and youth, not to mention the recent obligations you have laid me under. But I know you are not in want of any thing I can do for you, therefore I can only offer you my esteem and my affection;—the tenor of your whole life has entitled you to the former, and your late

late generous action, and still more recent condescension, has put you in possession of the latter."

"I never wished for more believe me, my Lord," replied the Duke; "and I am very happy my maternal grandfather put it out of my power to accept any thing else, had you the wealth of both the Indies to bestow; because it will convince you that you owe my regard to disinterested motives. Upon his death-bed he asked me if I wished him to die in peace? your Lordship may guess what my answer was. He then conjured me to give him my word to comply with what might justly be deemed his last request. I did as he desired; and then solemnly swore that, admitting I should ever, by the same chance which constituted me his, become also your heir, I would renounce all claims to your title and estates; continue all my life to profess the religion in which I had been brought up, and remain a subject of the King of Naples. I farther bound myself to educate my sons in the same principles."

Lord Gowrie's natural gloomy countenance brightened by degrees as the Duke concluded ; and even distorted his unmeaning features into what he would have termed a smile of approbation, though it might more properly have been deemed a ghastly grin.

The Earl was evidently hurt, though he tried to conceal his vexation : he looked at his Grace—" I find the Duke di St. Severino neither imitated nor approved my conduct : " then, after a pause, " All my children gone before me!—Well, I am justly punished (casting a disdainful glance at Lord Gowrie;) and am each succeeding moment more and more sensible of my past errors."

The Duke endeavoured to give the conversation a gayer turn, and in a short time perfectly succeeded. Lord Gowrie was now become quite reconciled, nay even rejoiced at this unexpected discovery, which had so effectually diverted the grandfather's thoughts from his recent accident ; and as he found he might be a considerable gainer, and could

not be a loser by this new cousin, he treated his Grace with the utmost respect and every mark of politeness. This he thought was also paying his court to the Earl; an idea that enabled him to perform the part he had allotted himself with some degree of success. They sat up late after supper; and though the Earl could not prevail upon this darling grandson to alter his first arrangement, and take up his residence at Melton House, the Duke promised to visit him often during his stay in town, and to pay him a visit in Rutlandshire before he left England.

CHAP. VII.

NEXT morning the whole party breakfasted together, and then proceeded to town, having first agreed to dine at Rochester. The Earl, anxious to display his munificence, had risen early, and sent for the Captain they had sailed with, the boatmen, &c. but found, to his infinite mortification, the Duke had already rewarded them in the most ample and liberal manner—a commission his Grace had entrusted with his valet previous to Neville's joining him after his nap, thinking the poor sailors in particular would be

be anxious to drink the Earl's perfect recovery. Thus were his Lordship's generous intentions in that respect counteracted: however, he made the Captain a very handsome present, and distributed a few guineas among the boatmen and sailors. He next paid the bill of the house without making a single comment, rather an unusual thing with his Lordship, as the landlord observed, for he had known him cavil about sixpence.

The Duke's valet, who always settled his travelling expences, acquainted his master on rising with what the Earl had done: this was no more than his Grace expected from the invitation he had received, admitting the recent discovery had not taken place;—he therefore merely desired him to give what he had before ordered to the servants of the house, and joined the Earl with Alfred, who had not been forgotten by his great-grandfather, as the old Peer thought he could not ingratiate himself more effectually with the Duke, though, to do him justice, he was really remarkably fond of the child. The
little

little basket he had seen at Ath, and which he had remarked overnight in the Duke's saloon among other articles of loose baggage, was filled by his orders with various sorts of cakes, sweet-meats, &c.

His Lordship would have liked to have travelled with the Duke; but as his Grace did not make the proposal, he did not chuse to mention his wishes, as he found he could not take the same liberties with the Duke di Ferrara as he could with the Viscount and Mellifont, to whom he chose to expatiate in the most pompous terms upon his Grace's consequence, and to hint he expected them both to pay him the utmost respect. "Sole heir, you find, to two of the most noble, most illustrious houses in Sicily: his immense fortune is his least boast. He is also a grandee of Spain, Prince of the Roman Empire, &c. therefore far superior to many sovereign princes, and may truly be ranked among the first subjects in Europe."

Mellifont would have enjoyed asking the old man why he found himself so grievously
offended

offended with his son for marrying into one of these illustrious families; but did not chuse to lower him in the midst of his triumph.

The Duke, Neville, and Alfred travelled together as before; and as soon as they were upon the road, the Duke said, "I can suppose, my dear Neville, you are rather surprised to find me so nearly related to the Earl of Melton? Upon my honour I had not the slightest intention of making myself known to him when I quitted Naples. Count Mondovi was not exempt, any more than myself, from his share of human failings; but I have ever, till lately, thought him an angel when compared with Lord Melton, who, I now find, has many good qualities to compensate in some degree for many bad ones; for I must ever consider his behaviour to my father as unpardonable. Yet, if he had not unfortunately been born a great man, I do believe dame Nature intended him for a very good one; but early taught to fancy himself of a superior order
of

of beings, pride checked his growing virtues, and fostered his vices : ostentation, its usual companion, is sure to beget avarice ; and that passion soon predominates even over natural affection, and often leads its votaries into the commission of the greatest crimes."

" I perfectly agree with your Grace," said Neville, " and can suppose Lord Melton was very much spoiled in his youth ; for, like me, I believe he was an only son. Fortunately Lord Fortrose early sent me from home ; and great schools are in some measure to be compared to commonwealths, and in that respect of infinite service to our titled youths ; yet they meet with adulation even there from ushers, or those of their companions who hope to be provided for in future by early paying homage to their rank. How much do I think those children to be envied whose parents are capable of undertaking the arduous task of their education ! I know your Grace has, as well as I, a particular dislike to compliments, or I could expatiate for some time longer upon the benefit of example,

example, which doubly enforces every parental precept ; and you must permit to say, that if your son conforms to your principles, and adopts your maxims, he won't bear any very great resemblance to our present race of fashionable young men : but do you know I hardly was ever more astonished than when he so innocently mentioned his grandfather last night."

"I don't doubt it," said the Duke ; "and it was so natural at his age, I could not have been angry with him, let what would have been the consequence of his observation ; but as matters stood, I was rather glad than sorry. The Earl seems truly sensible of his past injustice ; for at all events my mother's birth was equal, if not superior, to my father's ; and I own my pride was rather gratified. I am Lord Melton's grandson you know, Neville ; therefore it may be supposed I inherit some of his failings : but positively I was infinitely pleased I had it in my power to convince the old Peer the descendant of the *nominal Count Mondovi* was not in want of

of any thing he has to bestow. But to have done with pride : Do you know I feel myself particularly interested in the fate of my cousin Mellifont ; he is so exactly in the same predicament with respect to the Earl, that I was with respect to Count Mondovi before he became Duke di St. Severino. I must devise some means, with your assistance, Neville, to make him thoroughly independent, for the Earl seems determined to persevere in his old system to the end of his life. Now, with respect to Lord Gowrie, I think him perfectly right ; but I blame him very much for pursuing the same course with Captain Mellifont. Such, I presume, was the manner in which he treated his sons ; for I don't suppose he ever took the trouble to study their dispositions. As for my much-to-be-lamented father, it was his fate to continue in a state of dependance almost through life. My mother's death was a dreadful stroke ! What must have been his feelings, I have often thought, to find himself, when deprived of her loved society, an isolated stranger in a foreign

foreign country, supported by the bounty of a capricious old man, who latterly would hardly allow him to enjoy the company of his son, particularly after he made me my own master, fearful I should be tempted to deviate from the faith of my maternal ancestors, or be inclined to visit my English relations, the thing of all others the Duke di Severino dreaded! However, with a view to prolong my father's life, or at all events to have it in my power, by unremitting attention, to sooth his latter moments, I gave my hand to the Duchess di Ferrara. My heart was not in my own possession to bestow; but her exemplary conduct first excited my esteem, next my affection. She was the mother of my children; and soon became as eager to promote Mr. St. Aubyn's happiness as I was myself. She was several years older than me, and entirely her own mistress at the time we married. My heart, I have already told you, was pre-engaged; indeed I had been upon the point of marriage with another lady, to whom my whole
soul

soul was devoted. I perceive I am going to talk nonsense, Neville; but I was at that time very young, and romantic to an excess: my affection was as tenderly returned; my mistress of course an angel, and in her opinion I was perhaps a demigod. However at the altar we were separated by the lady's father; and within the twelvemonth, for reasons I have already mentioned, I parted with my liberty, and learned, by mere chance, soon after my chosen bride had done the same; so we shan't be celebrated for our constancy. However, to return to the Duchess di Ferrara, whom I must ever regret: Before she gave me her hand, in consequence of some hints she gathered from Signora Leon-
tini, she made over, by deed of gift, a very large estate she possessed in Lombardy to Mr. St. Aubyn: I therefore had the infinite satisfaction of knowing he then had it in his power to enjoy every luxury he had forfeited by his ill-fated marriage. He chose to reside with us; indeed it was our particular desire; and we each strove to make him

him forget his past sorrows. Our eldest son was named after him; and he seemed upon the recovery for some time after Alfred's birth: I wished him to have tried his native air. But not to dwell upon the subject, for I ought not to repine at the decrees of Providence. I have the consolation of being assured my children will never know what it is to be dependant upon any one but their father; and as soon as they are at an age to appreciate the action, I will make them their own masters. Now, my dear Neville, you are thoroughly acquainted with my family, history, and every secret of my heart. Long as I have been in habits of intimacy with Lord Fortrose, he does not yet know I owe my birth to an Englishman. My father was no more ere his Lordship visited Sicily. I was not at that time at all anxious to make enquiries about Lord Melton or his family, whom I then sincerely despised. You, I find, are acquainted with my mother that was to have been—Miss or Mrs. Studeville, to whose generosity my father was certainly very much indebted,

debted, as she once sent him, as I told the Earl, five hundred pounds as from his Lordship."

"More shame she did not make it thousands, your Grace, if she was inclined to be generous with such ample means in her power!"

"Well but, my dear friend, let us do the old lady justice; you ought to consider my father was a faithless lover; therefore, I think, all things considered, she gave very great proofs of her benevolence and forgiving disposition; but as this was a subject I never chose to start with Mr. St. Aubyn, do give me some account of her; for, from what he has said at times, I should suppose she is now a maiden rather stricken in years. I own I should wish to be introduced to her, but I am afraid, as the Earl and she are upon terms of intimacy, she will now be informed who the Duke di Ferrara is. As a foreign nobleman, a friend of Lord Fortrose's, I was in hopes I should have met with a gracious reception; but I much doubt whether she will receive the son of Alfred St. Aubyn."

"Trust

“ Trust to the spinster’s curiosity, independent of her predilection in favour of her superiors. But I will give your Grace all the information in my power respecting this good lady, and every branch of the Studeville family. About nine years ago, Lord Fortrose, either out of love for her person or estates, or perhaps from a nobler motive, compassion, made this venerable spinster an offer of his hand; she, fearful I presume of undertaking the charge of such a mad-brained youth as I then was, politely declined accepting the title of my mother-in-law. Excuse this little digression, Duke; I will now enter upon my story. Mrs. Rachel de Studeville is the descendant of a brave Knight of that name, who accompanied our first William to England, and preferring our sea-girt isle to the boasted plains of Neustria, he fixed his residence in Gloucestershire, and built, as I have been told, the very house the old lady in question now inhabits. She could give you an accurate account of every part of the family, their various intermarriages,

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VOL. I. I riages,

riages, &c. from Sir Hubert, the first who ever resided in England, to Sir Yelverton, her late father, who was the only son of Sir Jacob de Studeville;—she is particularly attached to that *de*, it is such a convincing proof of her Norman origin. Sir Yelverton was immensely rich, and had a proper sense of his own dignity (I use his daughter's words); he therefore sought an alliance with an equally ancient family; and after a proper time spent in courtship, led Miss Rachel de Courcy, a descendant of the first Baron de Courcy, and daughter and coheiress to Sir Roger de Courcy, to the altar. I always understood they were a very happy couple. Unfortunately they were not blessed with a son; three daughters were all their issue; and Lady de Studeville did not survive the birth of the last many months. Sir Yelverton mourned for her very sincerely; and, greatly as he wished for a son, never made a second choice. His whole happiness centered in his daughters; and as they grew up, he determined to look out for husbands

for

for them, at least their equals, if not their superiors, in point of birth, and intended the gentleman who entered the holy pale with Miss Rachel his first born, should assume the ancient name and arms of Studeville at his decease, willing to perpetuate his illustrious race to the end of the world. I am afraid your Grace will think me very prolix," said Neville, but I can hardly avoid mentioning some of Mrs. Studeville's connections, to give you a just idea of herself."

"Pray proceed," said the Duke; "I am all attention. My poor father's fortune was so much interwoven with the good lady's, that her's must necessarily constitute great part of his story; therefore the more minute you are, the more you will oblige me."

"I presume I need not inform your Grace, that the Earl of Melton married the other daughter of Sir Roger de Courcy, and was therefore brother by marriage to Sir Yelverton, who was by no means celebrated for the brilliancy of his talents. The Earl easily
assumed

assumed a very great ascendancy over his mind, as the Baronet began by admiring, and finished by submitting in every respect to *his brother the Earl's* superior judgment. Lord Melton foresaw great advantage might arise to one of his younger son's from an union between the two families ; and felt no objection to their adding the name of Studeville to that of St. Aubyn, having, as a matter of course, pitched upon Miss Rachel for his daughter-in-law. This young lady had many good offers ; but, as the Earl was always consulted, he contrived to start some very weighty objection to these various proposals, till his youngest son became of an age to enter the ranks as her lover. Unfortunately by that time Miss Rachel, though still a fine figure, and what was generally called a fine woman, was rather past the meridian of life, having entered her three-and-thirtieth year before the Earl imparted the plan he had in agitation to the Baronet ; which he did as soon as your Grace's father returned from his travels, who was then in his two-and-twentieth

twentieth year, allowed to be one of the handsomest men, and finest figures in Great Britain. Sir Yelverton eagerly snapped at the proposal, and immediately communicated what had passed between the Earl and him to his beloved Rachel, to whom her intended lover was introduced in form within a month after his return to England, and, as might be expected, made the most favourable impression upon the blooming damsel's heart :—his natural politeness she construed into love ; in short every succeeding interview increased the lady's partiality for Mr. St. Aubyn, who, I presume, as his heart was at that time wholly disengaged, paid her the mere compliments *d'usage* upon such occasions, and found himself accepted before he perhaps thought of making the offer. In short, every thing was settled between the two fathers, and the nuptials were to take place early the ensuing spring. But in the month of November a nobleman of high rank, a particular friend of Lord Melton's, was appointed to go upon an important, or,

what is usually termed, extraordinary embassy to the Court of Naples; having known the Hon. Alfred St. Aubyn abroad, was desirous he should accompany him as his public secretary: and as the Earl particularly wished to bring him forward in the diplomatic line, he did not chuse to let so favourable an opportunity slip, particularly as he was only to be absent for a few months, and every preparation for his approaching marriage could equally be made during his stay abroad; and wisely thinking, I presume, it would exonerate the young gentleman from the fatigue of a tedious courtship, as I can't suppose the Earl thought Mr. St. Aubyn was violently smitten with Miss Rachel's youthful attractions. I need not tell your Grace what was the consequence of your father's journey: and I believe very few people, if any (for it was a subject the Earl never chose to mention, and which no one could start in his presence), knew what really became of Mr. St. Aubyn, except, as I before told your Grace, that he had married

ried abroad. This news, as Lord Fortrose has told me, soon reached England, and proved a mortal blow, at least for some time, to the peace of mind of Miss Studeville. Indeed it was for some time doubtful whether she would survive the shock her tender feelings sustained; and she has positively worn the willow ever since. Sir Yelverton was, as your Grace may suppose, as much incensed as the Earl; indeed he generally followed his Lordship's lead, and applauded or resented as he set him the example;—of course no blame could be imputed to Lord Melton; so that this event by no means weakened their mutual friendship. Unfortunately the late Lord Gowrie and the late Hon. Mr. Frederick St. Aubyn were both married, else they might have supplied their brother's place. Thus all hopes of becoming more nearly related through the means of their children were forced to be relinquished by the Earl and Baronet; though, perhaps, as in the first paroxysms of her grief, Miss Rachel had vowed never to listen to

the addresses of any other man, the Earl might have formed some hopes that by the time his grandsons had attained the years of discretion, she might relent, and still unite the names of St. Aubyn and Studeville.— But to return to Sir Yelverton. He, as might be expected, having inherited a few French notions from his ancestors, had always declared he would never listen to any proposals in favour of his other daughters till Miss Rachel was married; and the two young ladies, thus in a measure doomed to celibacy, were too well acquainted with their father's obstinacy to expect he would alter this decree, well aware that he was supported in this and many other absurdities by the Earl, their uncle. Miss Bridget, his second daughter, angry to find herself advancing into the vale of years, and tired of waiting her father's pleasure, gave her hand, unknown to Sir Yelverton, to a Mr. Chambers, a smart Londoner, who had just succeeded his father (a wholesale woollen draper) in business, and came down upon that occasion

occasion to visit his correspondents at Bristol. He shewed off in all his finery at a ball in that city, obtained Miss Bridget Studeville's hand for the night (I ought to have observed, Sir Yelverton was not present upon this memorable evening), and her heart for ever. The young draper thought she would prove a very great prize; assumed the title of merchant, talked largely of his counting-house and clerks, I can suppose; and she, who thought any place must be preferable to Studeville Court, and had been told many London merchants vied in point of magnificence and luxury in their houses and stile of living with some of the first nobility, readily accepted his offer. The young Cit bore away his fair bride in triumph, and placed her as superintendent of his household shopmen, &c. at his house in Birchin-lane. I can't suppose the draper's stile of living, household, &c. corresponded with the expectations she had formed; but of this I am no judge. I merely know Sir Yelverton swore never to forgive such a breach of

etiquette and filial duty, and made one of those vows he was never known to revoke, not to bestow a shilling upon her, even to save her from starving. The mortified draper, who humbled himself more than any man of spirit would have done (both before and after the birth of a son, the first fruit of his marriage), tried every means to deprecate the Baronet's resentment; but his endeavours merely served if possible to increase Sir Yelverton's natural implacability. Be that as it may, I never heard Mrs. Chambers was any material sufferer through her father's unrelenting disposition. But I have not yet enumerated all Sir Yelverton's domestic troubles;—his third daughter, whose name was Grace, was also distinguished by the appellation of the Belle of the family: she was seven or eight years younger than either of her sisters, but, shocking to relate, like Miss Bridget, she had a will of her own. Her godmother had left her twenty thousand pounds independent of the Baronet, and absolutely at her own disposal. ‘The most

most imprudent thing that ever was done,' said Sir Yelverton; and when she, in opposition to his tyrannical authority, bestowed herself and fortune upon a gentleman of the name of Vernon, then Minister of the parish she resided in, the Baronet declared it was no more than he had expected from the moment she became in a manner her own mistress: and, notwithstanding Mr. Vernon was of a very good family, and a most amiable worthy man, generally respected and beloved, he was more incensed with his daughter Grace than with her sister Bridget. In the first place Mr. Vernon had solicited his consent to pay his addresses to Miss Grace, and had been forbidden his house in return for his presumption. To dare to marry his daughter in direct opposition to his will, was an action no good clergyman would have been guilty of; besides he had an aversion to his cloth, though he sometimes went to church, and had been heard, in imitation of Lord Melton, to say, Mr. Vernon was a very fine preacher. When therefore he

found he was, so much against his inclination, become his son-in-law, there was no end of his declamations against the clergy in general; even the bench of Bishops were included in his censure for having ordained this (as he stiled him) worthless divine. Unwilling to appear and brave his insulting anger, Mr. Vernon, notwithstanding he was very much and very deservedly beloved by his parishioners, retired with his wife immediately after his marriage to another living he had in Somersetshire, while his friends endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between him and the Baronet, among the foremost of whom was my father; but it would have been more practicable to have reasoned with the wind; therefore the attempt was given up as fruitless, and Sir Yelverton continued to call down vengeance upon the culprits during his life-time. Whether these repeated disappointments hastened his death, or whether his time was come, I can't pretend to determine; but just after Mrs. Vernon had given birth to a son,

son, he was seized with a violent fever, and numbered among the dead in the course of a few days. During his illness several of his friends ventured once more to endeavour to soften him in favour of his daughter Grace, and mentioned her having just lain in, in hopes he would at all events notice his grandchild in his will. But he chose to carry his implacable resentment even beyond the grave it may be said, as he left the whole of his landed property to his beloved Rachel, and a very large sum of ready money, without any restrictions whatsoever; requesting she would bestow her name with her hand, should she chuse to marry after his decease. His brother, the Earl, came in for a handsome legacy; but as for his other daughters, their names were merely inserted in his will that he might lawfully exclude them from any share of his fortune. Mrs. Vernon was, notwithstanding the Baronet's kind wishes to the contrary, as happy as an excellent husband and every comfort this world affords could make her. She has been dead
some

some years as well as her husband; they have left two children, a son and a daughter, with whom I am unacquainted but by report; the young gentleman is much about my own age, and has already fooled away a very handsome fortune inherited from his father, in gaming and other fashionable vices. Mr. Vernon meant to have brought him up for the church, but he preferred the bar; and is now endeavouring, I should suppose, to retrieve by his talents what he has lost by his folly: though a friend of mind wrote me word very lately, he rather thought he would become an itinerant Methodist preacher, as he never saw a man so much altered in so short a time. His sister, who I have been told is very handsome, resided with her paternal grandmother till the old lady paid the debt of nature, which she did about two years ago, bequeathing all her possessions to this favourite grandchild. With what Mr. Vernon left her, this young lady is presumed to be worth between twenty and thirty thousand pounds; and now resides with her
maiden

maiden aunt, Mrs. Rachel Studeville, who invited her to her ancient mansion as soon as she heard her grandmother was no more; and her brother, thinking, I presume, it may be some time ere he reaches the honours of the woofsack, has, under pretence of visiting his sister, got introduced to this rich aunt, in hopes she will leave him something considerable to subsist upon till he attains the title of Chancellor. Mrs. Chambers has likewise been dead some years, and also left two children behind her, whom the draper, since the death of their mother, has had presented to Mrs. Studeville, and has since had the supreme honour of being admitted into her company himself. The old lady's health is growing rather precarious, and I suppose she begins to think it necessary to atone in some degree for her past neglect of her sister's children. The Chambers family have been twice at the Court, my father wrote me word, and once at her other seat; so perhaps at the spinster's death they may come in for some part of her immense property. To

whom

whom the bulk of her fortune will devolve, I can't pretend to guess; nay I even think it very probable she will divide it equally among Sir Yelverton's descendants; at her death I mean—for I am sure she won't part with a stiver during her life-time. Your Grace is now, in some respects, as well acquainted with the Studeville family as ever I was; and my father will be very happy to introduce you to the present head of it; I will take upon myself to ensure you a very favourable reception."

"I am infinitely obliged to you, my dear Neville," replied the Duke; "but in case I should not have the advantage of a personal interview with this favoured daughter of Sir Yelverton's, do describe her to me, that I may form some faint idea of her person and disposition."

"I will endeavour to satisfy your Grace," rejoined Neville, "and do all the justice in my power to this venerable spinster of sixty-one, who has been in a sort of decline, I am informed, for these last two years. She is
tall,

tall, rather thin, and what some people would be unpolite enough to call hard-featured; yet, joking apart, I have often heard my father say (for though they did not join their manors, they have ever continued good friends) she would be a very agreeable woman of her age, if she could but divest herself of some of her antiquated notions, and the stupid formality she inherits from Sir Yelverton, who was a most absurd old fellow, (as Lord Fortrose has often told me); and Miss Rachel, wishing to convince the world of her regard for his memory, affects to tread directly in his steps. Yet my father assures me she is by no means deficient in point of judgment, and has often astonished him by her shrewd remarks. Her temper is naturally very good; but the severe disappointment she met with in her youth, has made her, like Lord Melton, rather pettish, and often capricious; like him, she prides herself too much upon what she deems her illustrious origin. Then I can't with justice say her
establish-

establishment, or any thing belonging to her, houses excepted, are suitable to her large fortune. She keeps a coach and six I will allow, though she seldom drives more than four horses; the carriage is the one Sir Yelverton had built upon his marriage—fact, upon my soul, your Grace; though I believe it has been painted some few times since, but in no particular modernized; and as the Baronet always drove black, docked-tailed, staid, heavy beasts, so does she; and when one dies, another is bought to match the surviving five, and equally unmercifully deprived of its noblest ornament. Her steward, butler, and two footmen are all ancient domestics of her father's, and now quite grey-headed. I don't by any means blame her for retaining them in her service, only think she ought to increase her suite, to spare the poor old fellows as much as lies in her power. But, as I before observed, she certainly does not spend half her income; she must move by rule:—Sir Yelverton did
this,

this, and Sir Yelverton did that; she must conform in every respect to his ideas. She has no notion of fashion, altering her dinner hour, nor turning night into day, because some of her flighty neighbours are so absurd; breakfasting when they ought to dine, and drinking tea when they ought to be in bed: for her part, she rises at eight, takes a short walk if the morning is favourable for such exercise, breakfasts at nine, an airing after; if the weather permits, for she is very considerate in that respect, from half past twelve to two; dines at three, drinks tea at six, goes to prayers at nine, sups at half past, and is always in bed by eleven: nay, I dare say there has not been more than ten minutes' variation in these general rules since Sir Yelverton died. Her large fortune makes her respected in her neighbourhood, else she sees very little company, particularly of late years; and as she can't nor won't conform to the present fashion, she does not chuse to make visits.

visits. She does some good among the poorer sort in her vicinity, otherwise is not very charitably inclined: however, as she keeps a very good table, her old servants have it in their power to make up in some measure for her deficiencies in that respect; and her numerous tenants and small household are very much attached to her. With a more liberal education, she might have been adored in the county she inhabits. But I protest here is Rochester, and I dare say your Grace is not sorry for the seasonable interruption."

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CHAP. VIII.

A COURIER had been sent forward to the Bull, and a very good dinner awaited the traveller's arrival; who then proceeded on their journey, and got to London between eight and nine o'clock in the evening. The Duke and Mr. Neville took their leave of the Earl, Viscount, and Mellifont at the end of Dover-street, then drove into Grosvenor Square, where they were welcomed by Lord Fortrose in person, who had received his son's express, and was of course prepared to welcome his amiable guest, whom he hardly expected

expected to have seen in England so soon, though he had been in London near a fortnight in waiting. The Duke and he were exceedingly happy to see each other; and the sight of Alfred added to the Viscount's pleasure, as the child had still some faint recollection of having seen him in Sicily. The rencontre at Halle, accommodations at Ath, and other subsequent events, furnished them with ample subject for conversation till they retired for the night.

It now wanted a fortnight to Easter; in that time the Duke said he should have seen enough of the capital; and as he was particularly fond of a country life, it was agreed they should spend the holidays at Neville-House in Gloucestershire.

The Duke was hardly stirring the next morning before the Earl of Melton made his appearance in his dressing-room; invited himself to breakfast, having been introduced in form to Lord Fortrose by the Duke, and pressed the whole party so strenuously to sup at Melton-House, they could

not

not withstand his intreaties. His Grace paid his respects to the Neapolitan Ambassador in the course of the day, and in the evening was introduced by the Earl to Lady Gowrie, the widow of his eldest uncle, who kept his Lordship's house, and her daughter the Hon. Miss St. Aubyn, whom his Grace thought a very fine young woman, and who the old Peer now thought stood some chance of becoming a Dutchess, though he forbore mentioning, at least for the present, his sanguine hopes. Besides these ladies, there was a numerous circle of the Earl's particular friends assembled upon this joyful occasion, and whose curiosity had induced many of them to break engagements of a much longer standing. Lord Gowrie and Mellifont were also of the party, though neither of them resided at Melton House, as the Earl did not chuse to be disturbed in the night by young men whose pleasures or fancies might have kept them from home much beyond his usual hour of retiring. Still they were always looked upon as part of

of

of the family, and as such expected to dine with his Lordship when they had no other engagements; this they usually did. Lord Gowrie resided in a small house in an adjoining street, and Mellifont was in lodgings within a short walk of the Earl's, declining to accept an apartment his amiable cousin had offered him.

The evening passed gaily; the Duke received numerous invitations from the company; and foresaw his time would not hang very heavy upon his hands during his stay in town.

Lord Gowrie seized the earliest opportunity after their arrival (as his grandfather retired almost as soon as he reached Melton House, and Mellifont went immediately home), to mention to his aunt and cousin the accident the Earl had met with, and to expatiate upon his heartfelt sorrow on the occasion. Without the slightest suspicion he had any hand in the matter, neither her Ladyship nor her daughter gave him the least credit for his pretended grief: he had

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never been a favourite with either; and Lady Gowrie had come to a resolution during the Earl's absence, to break off the intended match between him and her daughter, foreseeing Miss St. Aubyn's happiness was at stake.

It was not till late next day, owing to his early visit in Grosvenor-square, they had an opportunity of congratulating the Earl upon his miraculous escape, the discovery which had ensued, &c.

Lady Gowrie was very happy to find from the old Peer's hints what his present views were for her daughter, and soon remarked the Earl treated Lord Gowrie with unusual coolness, which she naturally attributed to the comparisons he now had it in his power to make between him and the Duke di Ferrara, to whose shining talents and amiable qualities she was equally ready to do the utmost justice.

Lord Gowrie was more assiduous than ever in his visits to Melton House; yet the Earl's dislike to him visibly increased daily;

the suspicions he had entertained of his kind intentions when he fell into the sea, had never been obliterated from his mind ; and, as Lady Gowrie justly thought, the comparisons he drew between him and the Duke, to whom he constantly reflected he owed his existence, did not contribute to raise him in the Earl's esteem. He had frequently blushed for him before he went abroad, and was ever ashamed to introduce him as his heir ; and frequently wished he could put Mellifont, for whom he felt the greatest esteem, in his place. However, as that was impracticable, he tried to correct, though he secretly despised, Lord Gowrie. If such were his sentiments before they went their tour, it may be supposed his former indifference (not to give it a stronger name) for the Viscount now became dislike, mixed with something like dread, having had but too great a proof of his malicious disposition : he therefore suffered him to come in without a welcome, and to take leave without the slightest entreaty to prolong his visit.

visit. The Earl indeed seldom spoke to him at all, except in monosyllables, and then only in answer to his various questions. Lord Gowrie could not brook such treatment, yet dared not enquire what had occasioned him the misfortune to incur the Earl's displeasure, too conscious from what it arose. For several days all the newspapers were full of the Earl's accident, and the highest encomiums bestowed upon the nobleman who had saved his life. The rest of the party were also mentioned, but no notice taken of Lord Gowrie's affected grief; his proffered bribe was merely inserted to prove the imminent danger of the successful attempt the Duke di Ferrara had made, who, having understood such things were sometimes done, protested these paragraphs were the production of Lord Melton's pen, who was taking this method to make him vain, and to raise his own consequence in the eyes of his friends.

Lord Gowrie was by no means diverted with these recapitulations of an event he

wished to have had forgotten, nor with the raillery of his tavern friends, who laughed at him because his honours were of so short duration; while others commended him for not risking so valuable a life in trying to save the old fellow, who could very well be spared. These mere silly jokes he construed into reproaches, as most guilty people do; and was often, when alone at home, half frantic with rage. Mellifont was become his aversion; as for the Duke, as he had not an idea of his entertaining the same suspicions, he was only angry with him for his officiousness, and jealous of the praises the Earl and all his friends were eternally lavishing upon him; but as he knew he did not mean to stay long in England, and at all events could not interfere with his interested views, he merely wished he was upon his journey home again, and disliked, without otherwise wishing to hurt him.

On the eighth day after the Duke's arrival in London, a question of great importance was to be debated in the House of Peers.

Peers. His Grace expressed a wish to be present upon the occasion; Lord Fortrose therefore invited the Earl to an early dinner in Grosvenor-square, meaning to attend the house himself out of compliment to his guest, and Neville was to remain among the spectators, or more properly listeners, below the bar with the Duke. It was expected to be midnight before the Lords adjourned. The Earl felt himself very happy in having so excellent an opportunity of displaying his amazing powers of eloquence before this grandson, who was so capable of appreciating his talents. They set out between five and six o'clock, good places having been secured for his Grace and Mr. Neville; the former listened with the most unremitting attention and greatest pleasure to the debate. The Earl far surpassed his expectations; he was astonished to hear a man of his advanced age able to express himself so forcibly, and agreed with Neville in pronouncing him one of the first orators he had ever heard: there was a calm dignity in

his manner of delivery which added strength to his words.

It was between one and two in the morning before the house rose. The crowd was not so great as might have been expected, owing to the lateness of the hour; several carriages drove off before they heard the usual cry of "Lord Melton's carriage stops the way." The old Peer walked slowly down the passage leaning upon the Duke's arm, having exerted himself rather beyond his strength upon this important occasion. Lord Fortrose and Neville were close behind them, as their coach stood next in the ranks to take up. His Grace assisted the Earl into his carriage, wished him a very good night, and was retreating to allow the servants to shut the door, when he heard the Earl's coachman exclaim, "What rascal has done that? yonder he runs!" The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the horses began to prance. The Duke stepped hastily forward to see what was the matter: the fact was, some mischievous person

person had watched the opportunity while the coachman, having left his horses in the ranks, was gone into a neighbouring public house to refresh himself, to tie upon the end of the pole, just under the horses' noses, a large bunch of squibs, which were lighted at the moment the carriage stopped, by some person who held a flambeau in his hand, which he instantly extinguished, and ran away full speed. Owing to the sudden alarm and darkness of the night, he effected his escape unperceived; when the coachman called out, he only saw the touch-paper on fire, but by the time the Duke had advanced near enough to see what was the matter, it was in a full blaze, and the horses plunging most dreadfully; in a minute more they sprung forward with the utmost rapidity, as the coachman had no longer any power over them. The Duke snatching his great coat out of his servant's hand, who was waiting for him, darted so quickly as to catch hold of one of the horses' heads, by which means he was able to keep up with, and prevent

them from running against any other carriage they passed, while with his other hand he flung his great coat over the fire, and thus smothered it by degrees. As its fury abated, the poor frightened animals, who were remarkably gentle at another time, began to recover their alarm, and with the assistance of the coachman, the Duke was able to stop them before they reached Charing-cross.

The Earl sat all this time trembling in the carriage, not daring to jump out, though the door had remained open; nor could he conceive what had really happened, though he supposed the horses had taken fright. The moment the carriage stopped, he cried out, "For God's sake what is the matter?" and jumped upon the pavement, fear having quite made him forget his recent fatigue. The Duke was too much out of breath to answer him instantly, and the coachman still too much frightened. His Grace, as soon as able to speak, entreated the Earl not to be alarmed, for the danger was over. His Lordship, astonished at seeing his Grace run to

to him, apprehensive from his manner of speaking he had received some hurt: the Duke assured him he was only out of breath, which he should recover presently. While he was explaining as well as he could what had made the horses start, Lord Fortrose and Neville, who had ordered their carriage to drive on, thinking they should be better able to assist the Duke, for whose safety they were in terror, now came up with the Earl's, their own servants, and other followers, who had been hitherto distanced by the velocity of the horses. Lord Fortrose and his son were exceedingly happy no mischief had been the consequence of this wicked prank; entreated the Earl would get into their coach, and they would set him down, thinking his horses not sufficiently recovered for him to venture in his own. Having examined by the light of the torches the remains of the squibs, which had been tied on very fast, they were taken from the pole; the Earl declared if it cost him twenty thousand pounds, he would discover the perpetrator of

this atrocious deed ; protesting he once more owed his life to the Duke, whose presence of mind and great agility enabled him to stop the horses before they had dashed him and the carriage in pieces ; and again anxiously enquired how his Grace found himself ?

“ Perfectly able now to answer your Lordship’s kind enquiries ; I am rather warm, therefore, with your leave, we will get into Lord Fortrose’s carriage.” This they instantly did, equally anxious to prevent the Duke from getting cold, who laughed at the precautions they wanted him to take, observing if either of his Neapolitan running footmen had been present, they would have stopped the Earl’s horses in half the time he had been doing it ; therefore begged they would not praise him upon the occasion for his dexterity. They soon reached Melton House, where the old Peer wished them to have staid supper with him ; this the Duke, and of course Lord Fortrose and Neville declined, as they agreed his Lordship had better retire immediately, and endeavour

to

to recruit his exhausted spirits. The moment they drove from the door, the Duke said, "Can you, my Lord, or you, Mr. Neville, conceive what end this mischievous trick was meant to answer?"

"I think I can guess, your Grace," replied Neville.

"Then do favour me with your thoughts."

"Why it strikes me that Lord Gowrie, finding he could not drown this *dear* grandfather of his, had a mind to try what success he should have by employing the contrary element."

"Nay, you can't suppose a handful of squibs or rockets could have burned the carriage and the poor old man in it," said the Duke; "though they certainly might have been the occasion of his breaking his neck, or being otherwise maimed or killed. But God forgive me, for positively the same thought struck me. In my opinion it was just the malicious trick of such a fool; yet he certainly would not have thus exposed himself

himself to detection ; and whom would he dare have entrusted with such a secret ?”

“ Upon my word there is no accounting for the atrocious lengths such characters will go,” said Lord Fortrose. “ From the former remarks I have heard your Grace and Neville make, I own I am perfectly of your joint opinions, and was so before either of you spoke; though I did not chuse to introduce my suspicions. I really begin to think Lord Gowrie a very dangerous young fellow.”

“ I must be satisfied in some respects,” said the Duke ; “ with your Lordship’s permission, we will order the carriage to his house ;—if he is not at home, we may still suspect him ; and if he is, we shall be in some measure enabled to judge whether he was concerned in this affair ; for if that was him that ran by at the moment Lord Melton’s coachman spoke, he must, like myself, for the streets were very dirty, bear some marks upon his shoes and stockings ; he can’t have been long returned, and, as he won’t ex-

pect visitors, will hardly have taken the trouble to change them; and we ought not to condemn him merely because we think him capable of such an action; at all events, we shall have an excellent excuse for our late visit."

Orders were given in consequence to the coachman, and a few minutes brought them to the Viscount's door. The servants knocked three times before any body answered; and the Duke declared they should knock the door in but he would gain admittance. At last one of Lord Gowrie's servants came to the door; the Duke called out impatiently, "Is his Lordship at home?"

"Yes, your Grace; his Lordship went to bed about nine o'clock or soon after, not being very well.

At that moment they heard Lord Gowrie's voice speaking from the stairs to another servant, who was hurrying to answer his bell, (which the party in the coach heard ringing very furiously at the instant the
house-

house-door opened), and now heard him very distinctly calling, "Where the devil are you all, you parcel of sleepy scoundrels? Is the house to be knocked down through your laziness? Who is at the door?"

Perfectly convinced they had been wrong in their conjectures, the Duke told the servant to inform his master who they were, and to tell him they just called to let him know the Earl of Melton had narrowly escaped meeting with a dreadful accident on his return from the House of Peers, as they thought he might be alarmed should the report reach him before he saw the Earl, whom they had left perfectly well at Melton House. Lord Gowrie, who had by this time got a light, came into the passage in his night-cap, dressing-gown, and slippers; thanked the Duke very much for this kind mark of his attention, and said, if his Grace thought it at all necessary, he would go immediately into Piccadilly—he would be dressed in a few minutes. The Earl would most likely be in bed before he reached Melton House,

the

the Duke replied, therefore he thought his Lordship had much better defer his enquiries till morning ; so having wished him a good repose, and expressed his concern for having disturbed him, which he certainly would not have done had he supposed he was in bed, they took their leave, and proceeded to Grosvenor-square, blaming themselves very severely for having given way to their late suspicions. “ Well then we can only say,” said Neville, laughing, “ *Il n’est pas si diable qu’il est noir.*” They supped as soon as they reached home, and then retired, without having been at all able to account in a satisfactory manner to themselves for this strange event.

CHAP. IX.

WHATEVER suspicions Lord Melton might have formed, he chose to keep to himself; yet he seemed determined to discover, if possible, who the culprit or culprits were, for which purpose large rewards were offered in all the newspapers to any body who could throw light upon this strange affair. The rockets were as near as possible accurately described, and any person who recollected having sold such a quantity, was desired to come to Melton House, where they should be amply rewarded for their trouble.

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No one, however, appeared to put the Earl's liberality to the test; therefore the whole was laid to some mischievous boys, who were not aware of the consequence of their folly.

The second week of the Duke's stay in town slipped away as rapidly as the first had done. The Neapolitan Ambassador presented his Grace at Court; Lord Melton took care to be at St. James's upon the occasion, and to let every one know this elegant young man was his grandson. Having surveyed every thing worthy a traveller's notice, at the appointed time his Grace, Alfred, Lord Fortrose, and Neville set out for Gloucestershire, the Duke having promised the Earl to spend at least a fortnight at Melton Abbey before he left England. Lord Fortrose gave Lord Melton an invitation to Neville House, and the Earl assured him he would profit by his politeness, as he hoped to be in his Lordship's neighbourhood as soon as the House broke up. "My poor grandfather," said the Duke to
Neville,

Neville, when he found an opportunity, "fancies the wheels of Government could not go round without him."

"Very true, your Grace," was the answer; "you have done both the Earl and Great Britain an essential service."

The farther the Duke travelled in England, the more he was delighted with the country. The inns upon the Dover road struck him as being convenient and comfortable; but those he stopped at on their way to Bath, made him observe it was an absolute luxury to travel in Great Britain. They spent two days at Bath, and then proceeded to Neville House, which stood upon a fine eminence in a very pleasant village about five miles on the other side of Bristol, and about four from the Hot Wells. The prospect from the windows was delightful; they afforded a very fine view of the adjacent country, the channel, and Welch mountains, which closed the truly diversified scene.

Lord

Lord Melton had once during his Grace's stay in town, in a very cursory manner, as if fearful of reviving disagreeable recollections, named Mrs. Studeville as being a neighbour of Lord Fortrose's ; adding, " I sometimes visit the Court, for she has many estimable qualities ; and if your Grace likes it, as soon as I go down I shall be proud of introducing you to her."

The Duke, in return for this offer, said, " Her generosity towards my father has given me a very favourable opinion of her disposition ;" determined in his own mind not to wait his Lordship's arrival in Gloucestershire to pay his respects to the old lady, should chance throw them in each other's way.

During the journey he mentioned Mrs. Studeville to Lord Fortrose, and acknowledged there were few people he was more curious to see. The Viscount spoke of her in very high terms, mentioned her rejection of him, adding, " Though I may appear like La Fontaine's fox, who discovered, when he

he could not reach them, *the grapes were four*, I must say I am not sorry the old lady did not accept my offers;—her disposition and mine would not have accorded; for though few people condemn prodigality or extravagance more than myself, few people have a greater dislike to parsimonious economy. I understand she has just now a house full of company,” taking a letter out of his pocket which he had received the day before he left London from his sister, who kept his house in the country, and from which he read the following passage:—“Studeville Court once more seems inhabited; I drove past it yesterday, and to my no small astonishment, perceived the shutters of the windows facing the lawn were open. This unusual sight induced me to enquire at Mrs. Beaufort’s to what it was owing? and was informed Mr. Chambers, his son and daughter, and the former’s new married bride, were come down by special invitation to present the latter lady to Mrs. Studeville. Whether they will reap any substantial benefit from this visit, I
can’t

can't pretend to judge. However all my neighbours are, like myself, amazed at this excess of condescension in the good lady, which is attributed to various causes I shan't tire you with enumerating. Mr. Vernon has seized the same opportunity to visit the Court, having, as usual, a double motive for his politeness. I should observe there has been no fêtes given upon the joyful occasion that has assembled this family party, of whom Mrs. Studeville (even her enemies must allow not without just reason) seems as much ashamed as ever, as she did not accompany them to church last Sunday."

Lord Fortrose ceased reading. "I can assure your Grace," said he, "old Chambers is as great an original in his way as Mrs. Studeville is in her's. I have seen the worthy draper some few times during his short visits at the Court, and have always been excessively diverted by the obsequious respect with which he treats the owner, and the evident pains he takes to court her favour. But gross flattery and fulsome applause do
not

not suit Mrs. Studeville's taste; and as he is at the same time illiberal to an excess, vulgar, and remarkably low-bred, I almost wonder he has maintained his footing in her house."

"Perhaps the old lady has discovered some good qualities she may think compensate for his other deficiencies," said the Duke.

"He may be just and upright in all his dealings," replied Lord Fortrose in the same gay tone, "and what is termed an honest, blunt, Englishman; but upon my soul he is a very disagreeable companion. However, if your Grace will allow me the honour of introducing you to Mrs. Studeville, you will be able to judge whether your opinion of this worthy draper coincides with mine. What has particularly amused me when in his company, has been to watch his countenance, which unfortunately almost always contradicts his smooth fawning speeches; for while in the most humble tone he calls Mrs. Studeville his *good Madam*, and swears she

she has more sense than the rest of the world, if all their poor brains were jumbled together (I quote his own expression), his looks seem to say, ‘Damn you for a stupid formal old maid!’”

“Oh! what a cruel definition of the poor man’s thoughts!” said the Duke; I own you have made me long to see him; yet I had rather this wedding party should take their leave before I trouble you to introduce me. I presume the old lady will take this opportunity to dispose of some of her superfluous cash.”

“Not she truly,” said Lord Fortrose; I much question whether she would bestow any thing worthy her acceptance upon her favourite niece, Grace Vernon, who constantly resides with her, were she to marry; and at all events I should place her gifts more to the score of ostentation than generosity, were she to make over Studeville Court to her: but as for young Mr. and Mrs. Chambers, if they come in for a silver caudle cup, a coral for their first child, or
some

some such bauble, it will be more than I expect."

"Oh, shocking!" said the Duke; "well they must console themselves with hoping she will remember them in her will."

"Why, as she must dispose of her immense property to somebody, it will most probably fall to the share of her relations."

The conversation then took another turn, and no more was said or thought about Mrs. Studeville, till the second day after their arrival at Neville House, when Neville proposed a ride to the Duke, adding, "If you have no objection, we will take a survey of the ancient spinster's house and grounds."

The Duke had made several purchases of horses when in London, and some addition to the suite he had brought over with him, thinking English grooms far superior to those of any other nation; he therefore readily agreed to the proposal. Lord Fortrose begged to be excused from accompanying them, having letters to write; so
about

about one o'clock the Duke and Neville sallied forth; they did not take the direct road to the Court, meaning to take it on their return, as the most likely time to meet the owner after her accustomed airing; they therefore took a circuit, and came out upon the famous downs, the general resort of the invalids resident at Clifton and the Wells, at one extremity of which appeared Studeville Court. After a few turns, as there was but little company, it being hardly what is termed the season of the Hot Wells, they agreed to reconnoitre; therefore turned their horses' heads towards the Gothic mansion, which stood within a few hundred yards of the road, upon the side of a fine hill, leading down into a small neat village. The appearance of the house was truly noble, though every part of the building bore strong marks of its antiquity. At the back was a very fine park, well wooded and walled in, and in front an extensive lawn. The Duke admired both the house and situation, and observed, from the size and distance of

the windows, the rooms must be very lofty. Neville confirmed the justice of this remark. His Grace then reverted to the prospect, which, though extensive, was not to be compared to the one Neville House afforded; nor did he think the situation near so agreeable, nor the grounds laid out with half the taste Lord Fortrose had displayed in the disposal of his plantations. "This lawn is very neat," he proceeded, "and has a pleasant rural appearance; yet every thing I see conveys an idea of formality, coinciding, I presume, with the owner's disposition."

"Exactly," said Neville; "but an't you struck with the family arms over the entrance?"

"They are no addition, in my opinion," replied the Duke; "for what can display less taste or elegance than the confusion of heterogeneous figures, the various quarterings in the Studeville arms crowded into the same escutcheon?"

"Yet

"Yet they are the spinster's chief pride ; but she has a still finer seat near Newnham in this county ; the house is a most noble structure, erected by one of our most famous architects, and the park and pleasure grounds are far more extensive than these which surround the Court. Newnham-Hall was the chief residence of Sir Roger de Courcy, and became at his death the property of Sir Yelverton Studeville, who not chusing to have it sold, made up the difference to Lord Melton : but Mrs. Studeville is far more partial to the Court, and seldom spends more than a month or six weeks at a time at the hall."

"Perhaps she prefers this neighbourhood," said the Duke ; but let's be moving homewards ; it grows late, and we don't seem likely to be treated even with a sight of any of the servants."

They had scarcely spurred their horses ere an empty waggon passed them upon the full gallop, as the carter chose to whip his horses just upon the brow of the hill ; owing to

the descent, it was no longer in his power to stop them; the road was rather narrow, particularly towards the bottom, where it made a turn to the right to break the steepness of the hill. The Duke and Neville pulled up their horses to prevent accidents, and soon lost sight of the waggon; they therefore moved gently on, reprobating the driver for having taken such an opportunity to correct his horses, and observing how many accidents were occasioned by the brutality of such ignorant fellows. While they were thus justly arraigning the man's conduct, they heard some one give a loud shout, but could not distinguish what was said. "Some accident has happened I will lay my life," said the Duke, quickening his horse's pace while he spoke. The words were scarcely out of his mouth before they heard (the sound seemed to proceed from the bottom of the hill) a most violent crash. The waggon is overturned," said Neville, making all the haste, as well as the Duke, that prudence would admit down the hill.

"It

"It is not the waggon as you suppose," said the Duke; "you may still hear it rattle," which they did very plainly.

A few seconds brought them to the turning already described, and just below they perceived, absolutely overturned into the hedge; a carriage lying on its side, the coachman in the very act of scrambling out of the hedge, his four beasts were standing very quiet, and a lad was alighting from one of the fore horses. "Mrs. Studeville's black docks by heavens!" said Neville before they reached the carriage. "What a charming adventure, what an excellent story for a novel!"

"Wicked wretch!" said the Duke, "how can you laugh?"

"They were soon close to the coach, from whence proceeded an incessant screaming, which now assailed their ears. "Good God!" exclaimed Neville, "what must we do?"

While the Duke and he were hastily dismounting, without answering him his Grace

sprung upon the side of the carriage, and endeavoured to get the door open. The screams increased while he was thus employed; but he was soon seized by a lady who had been able to rise, and put her head through the window; his Grace instantly caught hold of her, and by her own efforts, being thus ably assisted, she was soon dragged out of the vehicle; his Grace then jumped down, and caught her in his arms, and thought, notwithstanding her frightened looks and dishevelled hair, he had seldom seen a more interesting figure: she was very simply dressed, and gave him a true idea of an elegant English woman. He immediately guessed, from the description Lord Fortrose had given him, this was Miss Vernon; nor was he mistaken. He entreated she would not be alarmed, and hoped she had not been a material sufferer. "Oh! pray, Sir," she exclaimed, without attending to his enquiries, "for God's sake save my aunt!" shoving him towards the carriage while she spoke;

spoke ; “ I am afraid she is dead—she said as much ! ”

The Duke's humanity did not need such an entreaty ; but Mr. Neville and one of the grooms were now upon the side of the carriage, and soon extricated two other young ladies from their disagreeable situation ; these were the bride, and her sister-in-law, Miss Rachel Chambers. They both continued to make as much noise after they were out of danger as they had done while they remained in the coach : they were sure they should die—they were frightened out of their senses ;—their dear aunt was dead !

The Duke left Neville to pacify them, for the moment the side of the antique vehicle was once more clear, he again sprung upon it, and looking in, perceived an elderly lady, whom he easily conjectured to be the *dear aunt* who had been pronounced dead, and his mother that was to have been. She soon convinced him that she was not even deprived of her senses, as she said in a very calm tone in comparison to the rest of her

party, "For God's sake help me! Where are you all?"

The Duke laid himself flat upon the side of the coach, got half through the window and hold of the poor old lady, whom he assisted to rise, and then, with the help of Mr. Neville, drew her along; the latter supported her while the Duke got down, took her in his arms, and carried her to some distance; he then set her upon her feet, though he continued to support her. The fright and fatigue she had undergone, added to a trifling hurt, quite overcame her, and she fainted in the Duke's arms, who seated himself upon the side of the bank, and supported her till the young ladies and Neville, by the help of smelling-bottles, &c. tried to recover her. She came to herself in a few minutes, and seemed shocked when she opened her eyes to find herself in the arms of so handsome a young man, and even made an effort to rise before she was able to speak. The Duke assisted her effort, entreating at the same time she would compose herself, and hinting

hinting that the young ladies were too much alarmed to afford her all the assistance they wished. She now caught sight of Mr. Neville, of whom she seemed to have some recollection, and when he addressed her, she had no longer a doubt who he was; therefore, from the company he was in, she was convinced the gentleman who still supported her, must be a man of some consequence: this rather reconciled her to the idea of having been in his arms. As soon as she was able to speak, she thanked the stranger and Mr. Neville in the politest terms for the timely assistance they had afforded her and her whole party, though her eyes were generally turned towards the Duke upon whose arm, at his request, she continued to lean. Having paid this, in some measure, involuntary tribute of admiration to his fine figure and handsome countenance, she asked her young companions if they were any of them much hurt? Miss Vernon assured her she had merely been frightened; and Mrs. and Miss Chambers declared they had not

had time to think about themselves, they had been so alarmed about her, and proceeded first to enquire how she did? and then to expatiate on their own fears till they wearied, instead of flattering, the person for whose safety they affected to be thus deeply interested.

Neville, convinced by this time none of the party had received any material injury, could hardly refrain from smiling when he looked at the old lady and the Duke, so many ridiculous fancies came across him; and was not a little amused by the side glances of admiration the spinster bestowed upon her elegant beau. The day was cool, and the wind rather brisk, therefore exercise, added to the Duke's late exertions, made Neville think he had never seen him look to so great advantage; his dress and accent pronounced him an Englishman, else the old lady would not have felt half the satisfaction she evidently did when he enquired in the civilest manner how she was? Much better she assured him; and as she was so near, was
certain

certain she should in a few minutes be perfectly able to walk home. A few more compliments passed between them, though Mrs. Studeville, who always adapted as nearly as she could her language to the person she was addressing, was very much at a loss in the present instance. She had looked at Neville more than once, as much as to say, why don't you give me a hint, or introduce me to your friend? But Neville enjoyed the idea of the surprise he had in store for her infinitely too much to allow him to comply with her wishes, therefore determined to keep her even in ignorance of his Grace's rank, as long as he could do so with propriety. It was very probable, he thought, Lord Melton had wrote her word of the recent addition his family had received; yet it was full as likely he might have been too much taken up since his return to England even to have thought of his antiquated niece; or he might wish to surprise her agreeably when he came down into Gloucestershire, by introducing the son of her

fickle but handsome admirer to her notice; and as she so seldom paid any visits in the neighbourhood, and saw so little company, he thought it very possible she might not have heard there was a foreign nobleman at Neville House. These various reflections occurred to him during the short complimentary conversation between his Grace and Mrs. Studeville, and made him resolve not to notice her broad hints respecting the Duke.

Most people are more or less struck with outward appearance, and this was the case with Mrs. Studeville and her young companions. The Duke's, like most foreign liveries, was very showy; and though that circumstance by no means denoted his rank, as a Commoner in England has in that respect the same privilege with a Peer, yet it gave them room to suppose he was a rich, if not a great man.

Neville's groom was assisting to extricate the dock-tail nags, by which means the old lady's servants got at the secret she was so

anxious

anxious to fathom before their mistress; this she easily guessed from perceiving their heads turned at the same moment as if by clock-work, to take a survey of the Duke; and the wonder and astonishment visible upon their countenances while they all three actually stared at his Grace, increased her own curiosity to such a degree, she with difficulty refrained from putting the question point blank to Neville, who, to avoid addressing the Duke, kept talking to the young ladies, who were almost as anxious as Mrs. Studeville to know who this handsome man was. The old lady, at a loss to devise any polite means of shortening her present irksome state of suspense, finding her legs were again able to support her, said she would try to walk home, and would have once more expressed her gratitude to the Duke, had he been at all inclined to listen to a repetition of formal compliments; this not being the case, he entreated in a gay tone, she would reserve all she had more to say in praise of Mr. Neville and himself till she was
rather

rather more recovered, and better able to do justice to the surprising heroism they had displayed. The coachman was therefore called to give in his report respecting the carriage, towards the relics of which (for such they might be truly deemed) the old lady had already cast many a wistful glance. "I will endeavour to get it home, Ma'am," said the man; "but I am afraid it must undergo a thorough repair before you will be able to use it again;" beginning to enumerate the various damages it appeared to have sustained by the violence of the overturn. The old lady soon stopped him, saying in a consequential tone, "That is enough, Samuel; I shall give orders for a new one at once, so get that to the Court as well as you can;" though she hardly knew why she wished to look great in the eyes of this stranger; and having thus, as she presumed, succeeded, she turned to Mr. Neville, enquired after Lord Fortrose and Mrs. Neville, then said she did not know he was returned to England. ("Then you have most probably never heard

of

of my companion," thought Neville); and hoped he would do her the favour to look in upon her, "When, as this gentleman said," she went on, looking at the Duke, "I shall be better able to renew my thanks for the kind interest you have taken in my accident; for the present, I entreat I may not detain you any longer from pursuing your ride. I am positively shocked when I reflect how long I have kept you standing in the cold already; but with the assistance of my niece Vernon's arm, I am confident I shall be able to reach my house; therefore allow me to wish you a very good morning, gentlemen."

"Though you seem so willing to dispense with our company, Madam," said the Duke, "you will not find it so easy a matter to get rid of us: these young ladies are certainly not yet sufficiently recovered to afford you any support; and I shall fancy myself more than repaid for all the trouble you think you have given me, if you will permit me to see you home."

Mrs.

Mrs. Studeville was too much flattered by this kind speech to make any further objections to his considerate proposal, though she longed more than ever to know who he was; they therefore began to move forward up the hill, Neville still purposely keeping in the back ground to prolong the old as well as the young ladies' suspense. Miss Vernon, a truly amiable unaffected girl, advanced and offered her services to support her aunt on the other side; but, shocked at the bare idea of appearing either weak or feeble in the eyes of this manly stranger, who was certainly perfectly competent to the task he had undertaken, she said, "No, I am much obliged to you, niece, I am too ably supported already to require any further assistance."

Miss Vernon retreated, and at his request accepted Mr. Neville's arm, to whom she said as they proceeded, "Upon my word, Sir, your friend must think me wild! I really hardly know how to excuse myself for the liberties I took with him."

"Your

"Your behaviour struck me as very natural at such a moment, Madam," said Neville; "you were seriously alarmed for Mrs. Studeville; your wishing, therefore, to send my friend to her assistance might be deemed a compliment paid to his dexterity; and I am convinced he was excessively happy you put it in his power to oblige you in endeavouring to assist your aunt. You must not judge him from his appearance, which might lead you to suppose him a fashionable man; for believe me he is quite an antediluvian in many of his opinions, and positively thinks it his duty to treat ladies of every age or rank, whenever in their company, with the utmost politeness. I am afraid you begin to think him a strange queer mortal."

Miss Vernon smiled, but was too little acquainted with Mr. Neville to chuse to reply as she could have wished.

They had by this time got the Court in view, and the old lady stopped her conductor, pointing to it—"That, Sir, is my house."

"I have

"I have already admired its situation and venerable appearance from the road, Madam," said the Duke.

They were proceeding on their walk, when the Duke's groom presented his master with a seal—"Your Grace dropped that, I believe, in getting upon the carriage."

An electrical stroke would have had less effect upon the spinster than these few words. She stopped almost instantaneously, and the rest of her party were obliged to follow her example to avoid passing her and the Duke: indeed they participated in no small degree in her astonishment. Miss Chambers, forgetful that Mr. Neville was so near, called out, "Mercy cousin!" looking at Miss Vernon. Though equally surprised, Miss Vernon had infinitely more command over her countenance and feelings, and effectually, though without speaking, checked Miss Chambers's natural loquacity. Neville did not attempt to conceal a smile, and secretly enjoyed the old lady's visible consternation, who vainly hoped her surprise had escaped

escaped the Duke's observation, who stood still as suddenly as herself to take the seal from his servant ; he thanked him, and then looking at it, said, " I perceive the link that held it is broke ;" put it into his waistcoat pocket, and was ready in a moment to proceed. —Not so Mrs. Studeville, who assumed an uncommon erect posture as she recovered her natural composure. " May I venture," said she, " to intreat your Grace and Mr. Neville (with whom I feel half inclined to be angry for not introducing me to you), will do me the honour to stop a few minutes at the Court, and eat a sandwich? it is the right time of day ; pray permit me to order your horses into my stables."

The Duke in a polite lively manner accepted the invitation.

They once more began to advance, though the old lady found some fresh beauty or prospect to point out every ten yards, for the sake of taking another glance at her elegant companion, while her face, now decorated with smiles, was a convincing proof she had forgot all

all her recent misfortunes and even complaints, or merely recollected them with satisfaction, as the means of introducing her to a Duke. She continued to maintain her upright posture in spite of fashion and old age; an additional formality (she would have misnamed dignity) was visible in her gait, and her consequence seemed to increase when she reflected she was leaning upon a nobleman of such distinction, whose title she never omitted when she addressed him; and fearful Neville might not, while they were surveying her house, have made the Duke sensible of her noble descent, she pointed out a small plantation, "That, your Grace, is one of the improvements Studeville Court owes to my father, Sir Yelverton de Studeville," laying great emphasis upon the name.

The Duke hardly knew which way to look; Neville affected to sneeze; while Miss Vernon, perfectly conscious of what had excited their mirth, said, with a smile she could not conceal, "That little shrubbery is my aunt's delight."

Mrs.

Mrs. Studeville was still very much perplexed in her own mind ; it was not enough merely to know her conductor was a Duke, she wished to know what name was affixed to it : had he got out of his carriage instead of alighting from his horse, his arms, or even his crest, would have satisfied her curiosity, for heraldry had been among her favourite studies. His livery led to nothing, as she was not equally acquainted with those given by the various British Dukes, and there were several much about his age. It was very strange Mr. Neville did not introduce him ; they had certainly got acquainted abroad ;—she must be satisfied ere they parted. While her thoughts were thus employed, they had reached the gate that led into the park, or more properly upon the lawn, when a servant on horseback, on his return from Bristol, whither he went every day for letters, newspapers, &c. came up, and without paying any attention to the strangers, alighted, and put a letter into his mistress's hand. "Is this all?" said the old lady, proud when she

she saw the seal, of having it once more in her power to display her consequence in the eyes of her companion.

"That was the only letter, Madam," said the servant; "here are the papers."

"Carry them into the house."

The man instantly retreated; and Mrs. Studeville, turning to the Duke, said, "From my uncle, the Earl of Melton. Your Grace has, no doubt, heard what a narrow escape he had very lately on his return from his embassy?"

The Duke assented in silence, and she proceeded—

"I have hardly been myself since. His Lordship wrote me three lines the day after he arrived in town to prevent me from deriving my first intelligence from a newspaper, which would have been seriously alarming. I have therefore been in hopes of hearing from him every day for this last week, as I am truly anxious to learn how he does."

"Then

"Then I intreat, Ma'am, my presence may not induce you to postpone reading your letter; I will take the opportunity to pay my respects to these young ladies," turning away for that purpose before she could make any effort to prevent him. Being thus left behind, and for that express purpose, she instantly opened her letter; but finding it contained more than the Earl's usual three lines, and not having her spectacles about her, which she would not have liked to exhibit before the Duke had they been in her pocket, she gave Miss Vernon a look, with which she instantly complied, and putting the letter into her hands, desired her to make haste—the Duke's politeness quite confused her. Miss Vernon immediately began to read as follows:—

MRS. STUDEVILLE.

"My dear Niece,

Melton House, April, 1792.

"I am with difficulty able to devote a quarter of an hour to my pen and you.

When

When I last wrote, I merely informed you of the miraculous escape I had met with on my passage home; let me now inform you I owe my present existence to an Italian nobleman of the first rank, whom I have the supreme happiness of numbering among my grandsons. I am sure I need not be more explicit; he is now in your neighbourhood upon a visit to Lord Fortrose, whom, like myself, he has laid under the greatest obligations. But I am not sufficiently at leisure to enter into any details; I only request, should chance lead you to Neville House, or should the Duke di Ferrara and you meet any where else, you would shew him every respect due to his superior rank. Your own good sense would doubtless have pointed out the propriety of such behaviour; but as you are rather in a peculiar situation with regard to this amiable young nobleman, I shall make no apologies for what I have recommended. If you see his Grace, who is, without exception, one of the finest figures I ever beheld, you will not need to be

be informed he is a Melton. I hope to be in Gloucestershire some time in the ensuing month, and will then (certain he will meet with a proper reception) introduce the flower of my family to your notice; till when, dearest niece, I remain your's,

“MELTON.”

“P. S.—Lady Gowrie has kindly undertaken to write you the short history his Grace was polite enough to give me of himself and family; and means also to inform you how we came to meet, &c. as you will no doubt be anxious for farther particulars respecting your's as well as our relation.”

Thus ended all Mrs. Studeville's perplexities respecting the noble stranger, but in a way so contrary to her expectations, she seemed to doubt the evidence of her ears, while Miss Vernon was elucidating this strange mystery. She looked at the Duke till the colour once more forsook her cheeks, and she seemed breathless between agitation and surprise. Miss Vernon, not absolutely un-

conscious of the cause of her emotion, (having, as it may be presumed, heard the story of the bitter disappointment which induced the venerable spinster to lead a life of celibacy), hastily caught hold of her arm, fearful she was again going to faint. The Duke having turned his head, and seen something was the matter, instantly thought "My uncle, the Earl," was very ill: he therefore once more offered his support, perceiving the old lady's legs tottered under her, and that she respired with difficulty, while he addressed her in an anxious tone, "No bad news I hope, Ma'am? the Earl of Melton, I trust, is well?"

Mrs. Studeville laid her hand upon his Grace's offered arm, and very unthinkingly grasped it hard, while she contemplated his countenance, in every feature of which she could now trace the strong resemblance he bore to her long-regretted lover, the handsome Alfred St. Aubyn. At last she was able to articulate, "The Earl is very well, I am much obliged to your Grace; but if I

am

am not mistaken, you are as much interested in his Lordship's health as myself? His letter informs me—" The old lady paused, not knowing how to proceed.

" You are perfectly right, Ma'am," said the Duke; " the Earl of Melton's grandson and your cousin, if you will do him the favour to acknowledge the relationship, must ever feel interested in the health and welfare of both."

The poor old lady burst into tears while she pressed the Duke's hands within her own, without being able to speak. His Grace was really affected, and a sort of general consternation once more prevailed among the young ladies.

Mrs. Studeville gradually recovered; and as soon as she found herself capable of articulating distinctly, said, " Your Grace must excuse me; your kind condescension, added to my surprise and joy, quite overpowered me. Pray, Mr. Neville, introduce me properly to your noble friend, as my uncle's kind letter was merely meant to prepare me

by degrees for the pleasure that awaited me, conscious, I am sure, it would, as it nearly has done, prove too much for me."

This time Neville instantly complied with her request, and the old lady welcomed her elegant cousin, first to England, then more particularly to Studeville Court. She would then have asked a few questions about the Earl's accident, but his Grace intreated she would defer all such enquiries for the present, and suffer him to lead her towards the house. She readily consented, and they walked slowly across the lawn.

Neville longed to communicate to the Duke a thousand ridiculous ideas that presented themselves, while a variety of past events recurred to Mrs. Studeville's remembrance. St. Aubyn had certainly, in her opinion, cruelly deserted her, yet she had long since forgiven him. She had learned from the Earl he was a widower, and that he had addressed his Lordship in behalf of his son, we need not add in vain, and in hopes of enabling him to return to England.

Mrs.

Mrs. Studeville had sent him, unknown to the Earl, the supply of money already mentioned: but was he still living? the bare idea made her tremble from head to foot; she longed to ask the question, but afraid of betraying her emotion, forbore to gratify her curiosity. How came his son to be a Duke? She understood he had married some distant relation of a very noble Sicilian family. Well, Lady Gowrie's promised letter would certainly satisfy her in this and in every other respect; she must therefore wait with patience till that arrived. So many thoughts crowded upon her mind, that had not the Duke purposely broke the thread of her ideas, they would most probably have reached the house in silence. Having answered the question his Grace had asked, not to relapse into her former taciturnity, she said, "Pray did your Grace ever before hear the name of de Studeville? I must entreat your pardon, my amiable cousin; your kind acknowledgment of me ought to have prevented me

from asking such an absurd question. My uncle, I presume——”

“You must pardon the interruption, my dear cousin,” said the Duke, smiling, “and attribute it solely to my eagerness to assure you that long before I was personally acquainted with my grandfather, I was taught to respect my cousin Studeville by my much-lamented father.”

His Grace was proceeding, but stopped, when she heaved a deep sigh, and turning from the Duke, dropped a tear to the memory of her once-adored lover: having wiped away the trace it had left on her cheek, she said, “We must be better acquainted, your Grace; my uncle meant to introduce us to each other, but I am very happy dame Chance has saved him the trouble. Lord Fortrose is, I presume, at Neville House; yet could not your Grace and Mr. Neville do me the honour to take a family dinner with me to-day?”

“You are very obliging, my dear Ma’am, but as Lord Fortrose expects company, who
have

have been in a great measure invited upon Mr. Neville's and my account, we cannot have that pleasure to-day; but I will certainly do myself the honour some other time, and will even answer for my friend Neville, who I am sure will gladly accompany me."

"You are willing to soften my disappointment, your Grace," said the old lady more cheerfully, "but I am afraid you will think I encroach upon your goodness; for I positively shall not be satisfied with a few formal visits while you are in my neighbourhood;—you must always be a welcome visiter at the Court; and as I hate indefinite terms, let me entreat both you and Mr. Neville would do me the honour to spend the first day you can dispose of at my house, or may I say next Thursday? I can't venture to extend my invitation to Lord Fortrose and Mrs. Neville; I go out so little myself—indeed of late years fashions and times are strangely altered; I am become almost a stranger amongst my neighbours."

Neither the Duke nor Neville having any particular engagement for the day mentioned, both assented to her proposal. The old lady's pride was never more gratified, nor more suddenly lowered.

They were by this time within twenty or thirty yards of the house, from whence, almost before she could express her thanks to the Duke for having thus kindly accepted her invitation, out rushed, half wild (at least they wished to appear so) with fear and anxiety, her three male guests—namely, the draper, his son and heir, and Mr. Vernon. The draper exactly answered Lord Fortrose's description of him; his son, from having had a much superior education, could better conceal the large share of low cunning he inherited from his father; yet he was in many respects equally illiterate, and what might truly be termed very under-bred. Young Vernon had been a most dashing fashionable buck, had kept his race-horses, his mistress, and shook his elbows as long as he had any thing to lose; he was now how-
ever

ever dwindled into a sanctified fawning parasite, and was paying the most servile court to his maiden aunt, in hopes she would at her death put it in his power once more to astonish the town with his buckish exploits; for though completely humbled, he was by no means corrected;—a most excellent education enabled him often to distance his competitors in the race—the Mr. Chambers'; yet he soon found, to his infinite sorrow, Mrs. Studeville did not make good the celebrated Lord Hardwicke's words, for she was neither to be "canted nor kicked out of any thing." He persevered, however, in his arduous task, and a true Proteus, changed with all her caprices, or if he gently ventured to differ from her in opinion, it was merely to allow himself to be brought into her way of thinking by the strength of her arguments; and he had the consolation to perceive, if his endeavours were not in some respects as successful as he wished, he was infinitely more in the old lady's good graces than any part of the Chambers family.

Such was the trio that advanced in such haste. The draper was rather corpulent—he therefore held his sides for a few seconds before he could recover breath; then, having lengthened his face as much as its natural plump rotundity would admit, he said, “The Lord be praised! my good Madam, how overjoyed I am to see you look so well; I never was so scared in all my born days as when I heard what a shocking misfortune you had met with. Pray how do you find yourself? bruised to a jelly though I dare say; however, there are no bones broke, I hope?”

“God forbid,” said his son, who stood at his elbow; “I am vastly happy to find you escaped so well, Madam.”

James Vernon was now able to come forward, and with a look suitable to the occasion, ventured to add his congratulations to those Mrs. Studeville had already received, and concluded by intreating she would permit him to set off instantly in search of the physician who usually attended

her

her; the best advice taken in time had, to his certain knowledge, prevented the dangerous consequences that sometimes arise from inward bruises. "I am very much obliged to you all, gentlemen," said the old lady with a stately air, and in a very cool tone; "I bless God I have been a very trifling sufferer by my overturn; should I find it necessary, I shall certainly have proper advice, but at present I don't foresee I shall be obliged to have recourse to medical aid."

The Duke and Neville, who were now close together, exchanged a smile, while these feeling gentlemen were thus expressing their sincere joy, as neither of them entertained a doubt but they would have more sincerely rejoiced had Mrs. Studeville broke her neck. The Duke could not help thinking how flattering it must be to the young ladies, one of whom was a bride, to find themselves thus absolutely overlooked upon an occasion which would have made men of real feeling address their first enquiries to their nearest and dearest relatives.

Had Mrs. Studeville reflected on whom were in her house, she would hardly have ventured to ask the Duke to dine with her while they continued at the Court, and hardly now knew whether she ought to set him down to table with such low vulgar beings as old Chambers and his son.

The arrival of the grooms had given the first intimation of the accident their mistress had met with to Mrs. Studeville's household, by which means it had reached the ear of her guests ;—without staying to ask any more questions, they all three ran out, and arrived, to the old lady's infinite mortification, as has been already related. Mrs. Studeville's cool indifferent reception was a very poor return, the draper thought, for their kind speeches : however, unwilling to give up the point, he now said, “ Would to God I had been upon the spot as those two gentlemen were ! by the living Jingo I would have broke every bone in that rascally carter's skin ! ” His son would have done something equally heroic ; while James Vernon, approaching
the

the Duke and Neville, unconscious whom he was addressing, said, "Allow me, gentlemen, to return you my heartfelt thanks for the assistance you so kindly afforded my aunt, sister, and cousins; it was a wonderful escape I protest; I shudder even now when I reflect upon what might have been the consequence of such an overturn. The brutal wretch who occasioned it certainly deserved the most exemplary punishment; but I flatter myself, as in this, so upon every similar occasion, the virtue, piety, and goodness of Mrs. Studeville will ever make her the peculiar care of Heaven."

Miss Vernon coloured violently, shocked to think her brother capable of what she thought insulting her aunt by such gross adulation, which almost amounted to impiety. The Duke looked another way; Neville bit his lips, and dared not venture to make any reply. The old lady, infinitely more offended than flattered, gave the pathetic orator a look sufficiently expressive of the contempt she at that moment felt for him;

him; for, as she often found it, from her present guests, open flattery is at first nauseous, and finishes by disgusting the person to whom it is addressed.

Old Chambers found James's fine panegyric had not succeeded, so determined to try what his affected bluntness would do, for he was in reality a greater sycophant than Mr. Vernon. He now broke out, "Well, well, my good Madam, I am as heartily glad you escaped unhurt as my nephew can be; but as I never studied for the bar, I can't make such fine speeches upon the occasion. There was not half the risk for those girls; though, God bless them! I should have been sorry if they had had any bones broke, or the like of that, though I dare swear they would not have minded so as you had not met with such a misfortune, which, Lord help us! at their time of life would have been trifling to what you might have suffered under them there surgeons' hands."

The old lady, more hurt by his concluding suggestion, than pleased by his attempt
to

to rally poor James, gave him a look that effectually prevented him from tormenting her with any more compliments; and equally wishing to inspire him with proper respect for the Duke, and convince him of his own insignificance, she took upon herself to apologize to his Grace for the familiarity with which her guests had treated a man of his consequence. Before the Duke could answer her, old Chambers, wishing to follow so good an example, though not a little surprised to find he had been all this while, without knowing it, in company with so great a man, having cast a look of reproach upon his daughter for not having, as he told her afterwards, put him up to this gossip, he thus began, prefacing his harangue with a very low bow—"Indeed, my Lord Duke, if I had known who I had been talking to, I should not have been so rude; I only hope you will be pleased, out of your great goodness, to make allowances for the news we had just heard, which certainly frightened away what poor wits we are blessed with."

"I know

"I know of no offence you have been guilty of, Sir," said the Duke; "and had you known who I was when you joined us, I should have thought the greatest breach of etiquette, at such a moment, would not only have been excusable, but even done the utmost honour to your feelings."

Perfectly unconscious of the oblique censure conveyed in these words, the draper was sure his Grace was very good; "to be sure, as you say, my Lord Duke, we did not know you, so there's no harm done." The old man having thus, as he thought, set every thing right, retreated with his son towards the females of his family, while James took his station on the other side of his sister. Mrs. and Miss Chambers had purposely staid behind to get out of the old lady's hearing; and, as they were bursting with the mighty secret, they began together to tell old Chambers and his son that this Duke was Mrs. Studeville's cousin. "The devil he is!" exclaimed the old fellow. "Why, James! I say, James!" Mr. Vernon instantly

instantly obeyed the summons, and was immediately informed of the surprising discovery. Chambers then proceeded, "Why, zounds and blood! did you ever hear any thing to equal this in your born days? Why I should not wonder if we were all turned adrift to make room for this great man, But I say, Rachel, what is the spark's name, and who is t'other young buck? He is a damned sneering puppy let him be who he will."

"He is the Hon. Mr. Neville," said James, "only son to Lord Viscount Fortrose, a near neighbour of Mrs. Studeville's."

"Aye, some impudent chap, I soon discovered that. But this Duke—ha, Rachel—"

Neither of the ladies could pronounce his name; but they were sure he was cousin to Mrs. Studeville, for she called him so, and cried for joy when she found out who he was. "The devil doubts her," said the old man; "Oh! to call such a great man cousin tickles the old girl's fancy. Well, why we will look big as well as she—ha, James!

my

my Lord Duke must be related to us you know ; so we will talk of our cousin the Duke ; if he will but make it worth our whiles, damme we won't mind acknowledging him. But hush, mum's the word, you all know ! so mind your P's and your Q's, d'ye hear ; and be sure you all twist your mouths into proper form to say your Grace, and my Lord Duke, and all that."

Their arrival in the hall put a stop to the draper's witty injunctions and conjectures. His Grace placed his ancient charge upon a sofa in the saloon she led him into, and would then, had she permitted him, have taken his leave, assuring her he would take an early opportunity of paying his respects to her ; but at present her late accident, fatigue she had undergone, &c. must make the company of even friends irksome.

The old lady began once more in her usual complimentary strain ; therefore, perceiving she would be seriously mortified if he did not comply with her request, he consented to drink a glass of wine before he left the

the Court. Miss Vernon, who, from having studied her aunt's disposition, perfectly understood her looks, had left the room almost as soon as she was seated, now returned, followed by a grey-headed butler, and two equally ancient footmen, bringing in a variety of cold things and different morning wines. The Duke and Neville each ate a sandwich, and drank a couple of glasses of sherry. Mrs. Studeville, on the Duke's recommendation, who declared she had infinitely more need of a cordial than either of them, agreed to pledge them, though so near her dinner hour. Old Chambers protested he still felt a sinking at the heart; Robert complained of a kind of faint sickness that came over him at first, but he would just take a snap; Mr. Vernon followed their example, not to appear singular. In short, they were always happy when an opportunity offered of gratifying their ravenous appetites, and ate enough, to prevent a return of their various complaints, as would have served three moderate people for

for a dinner, and drank in proportion, first to Mrs. Studeville's happy escape, then thanks to my Lord Duke; repeated them in a separate glass to Neville, and would very probably have soon been tipsy, if the Duke and Neville had not risen to depart. Mrs. Studeville, in spite of their joint entreaties to the contrary, would see them mount their horses, taking Miss Vernon's arm for that purpose, and remained upon the steps while they set off, intreating they would remember Thursday. The Duke hoped his memory would not be so treacherous as to prove his enemy upon so agreeable an occasion. Neville said something to the same purpose; both sensible, to use a phrase of Mrs. Cowley's, "the old lady would overlook any nonsense for the sake of the compliment;" and away they cantered, not opening their lips while within sight of the house; then, as if by mutual consent, reined in their horses, and began to laugh over their morning's adventure. The Duke assured Neville he gave him credit for his talents in the descriptive

tive line ; his cousin Studeville bore a very strong resemblance to the picture he had drawn, and exactly answered the ideas he had formed.

“ I hope your Grace will also allow me some merit as a prophet ; did not I insure you a favourable reception ? ”

“ Oh ! common politeness, after the assistance we afforded the whole party, must have made her very civil even to total strangers, and remember you were known ; however, I like the old lady much better than some of her guests. ”

“ Joking apart, your Grace, I did pity the poor old soul after the Earl’s letter had discovered the *pot aux roses** ; how many past events seemed to crowd upon her memory ; and had you been her own son, I don’t think she would have been happier to see you ; therefore I can suppose she was more in love with Mr. St. Aubyn than ever I shall be with the finest woman in Christendom. ”

* Secret.

As Neville ceased, they perceived the family coach, which, having been tied together, was dragging up the hill. The Duke observed it perfectly corresponded with the house and its mistress; adding, he was afraid she would be necessitated to conform to the reigning fashions if she ordered a new carriage, except indeed she sent to Paris for one of their *fiacres**, and had it lined and painted to her fancy; for they were the only vehicles he had ever seen in these degenerate days that bore any resemblance to Mrs. Studeville's unfortunate rumble.

"I dare say she will mourn over its remains," said Neville; "I would, if I was not afraid of affronting her, advise her to have them heaped in a pile, and burned in her favourite plantation, and by way of paying a compliment to Sir Yelverton, and out of respect to the memory of the elegant machine, the ashes ought to be preserved in a marble urn, and either placed upon the Baronet's monument in the parish-church, or

* Hackney coaches.

in a temple erected for the purpose upon the spot where the fragments were consumed. I would undertake to write a proper epitaph; and I think such an edifice would be a great addition to Sir Yelverton's boasted improvements." The Duke laughed very heartily at the idea, and Neville proceeded—"Your Grace has a very great treat in store I can assure you; you have not yet seen half the beauties of the fair spinster's Gothic mansion; you are fond of pictures, Lord Fortrose has told me."

"Very true," said the Duke; "but remember I have no pretensions to *virtu*, nor do I fancy myself a connoisseur. I presume Mrs. Studeville has a very fine collection."

"You are very right; her picture gallery is among her chief boasts; the upper part of the windows are stained glass, and exhibit the arms of her family from the Conquest to the present moment; all her brave ancestors cover the walls, placed in due form and order, some in armour, and some in tie-wigs; one, a great genius of the times, in his college

lege dress, and a fine long pen in his hand."

"I can conceive it to be far superior even to the famous gallery at Florence," said the Duke, "and positively begin to wonder the old lady never married. I must allow it was paying my father a very great compliment; but who among her relations will she think worthy of transmitting the name of de Studeville to their posterity; or does she wish it to become extinct at her death?"

"I can't pretend to say what her resolutions are, your Grace," said Neville with an arch look; "but I do think she might be prevailed upon even now to part with her liberty."

"Very possibly," said the Duke, smiling; "suppose you make the attempt; who knows but you may be more successful than your father."

"Upon my honour I should prefer the favourite niece with her present fortune to the spinster with her immense estate," said Neville;

Neville; "Miss Vernon appears to be a sensible, unaffected, agreeable girl."

"You have half lost your heart already I perceive; remember my cousin Grace fell to my lot."

"I almost envied you when I saw the charming girl clinging round you. But *apropos* to that, I ought to have apologized in her name for her behaviour; she assured me she was shocked when she reflected upon the liberties she had taken with your Grace even before she knew who you were."

"I neither perceived any impropriety in her behaviour," said the Duke, "nor was I conscious the pearl of the party had fallen to my share, till I had it in my power to draw comparisons between her and her companions; had you been equally fortunate, what a favourable opportunity it would have afforded you to have displayed your gallantry!"

"She really hits my fancy, your Grace, and I do think if I should assume courage enough to tell her so, our marriage (I am vain enough to flatter myself I should not

meet with a refusal) would afford an excellent theme for all the old maids, and other male and female gossips in our neighbourhood ; besides many entertaining paragraphs for the newspapers, as it would be solely attributed to the overturn; and my being struck with the young lady's charms as I was pulling her through the coach window."

" I fancy you began your premeditated attack upon her heart during our walk to the Court, for you kept her to yourself, and quite in the back-ground."

" That was merely because I wished to avoid addressing your Grace, else I was positively often at a loss for a subject till the discovery took place ; and I don't chuse to repeat what she said upon the occasion, lest I should tempt your Grace to become my rival. However, she has an infinite fund of drollery about her, and seems to divert herself very much at the expence of the Chambers family, as I am convinced her views are by no means similar to their's, though she treats her aunt with the utmost deference, which

which is, in my opinion, the most complicate, the most indirect, and the most flattering of all compliments."

" True, my dear Neville; and Mrs. Studeville, in my opinion, has sense enough to appreciate her niece's behaviour."

Their arrival at Neville House put a stop to the conversation; and during dinner they amused Lord Fortrose and Mrs. Neville with their accidental meeting with the lady of the Court, &c. His Lordship declared he was almost as angry with the carter as the valiant Mr. Chambers had been, for having deprived him of the pleasure he had promised himself of being present the first interview between his Grace and Mrs. Studeville, and laughed very heartily at the Duke's comments upon the lady's guests. We will therefore leave them to enjoy their mirth, and return to the Gothic mansion distinguished by the name of Studeville Court.

CHAP. X.

MRS. Studeville, as has been already related, stood upon the steps while the Duke and Mr. Neville made their parting bows. The old lady and her favourite niece had taken their station so exactly in the middle of the door-way, that all her guests, who had followed her into the hall, meaning, like herself, to shew the utmost respect to this great man, were, much against their will, forced to remain in the back-ground, as they dared not shove rudely by. Indeed the spinster had thus purposely excluded them from any share in his

his Grace's last bow, and maintained her post till the Duke and Mr. Neville turned out of the park;—she then silently walked back into the saloon, and Mr. Vernon repeated his entreaty that she would permit him to set out for Bristol in search of her physician: this kind offer was very coldly once more rejected, and the old lady immediately retired with Miss Vernon to have her left shoulder examined, which was rather bruised. Having, however, found great relief from the application of some aquabufade water, all idea of sending for a surgeon was given up. Miss Vernon was then sent down to do the honours of the table in her absence, as Mrs. Studeville meant to lie down the while; her hasty snap had taken away her appetite.

The party already mentioned was assembled in the eating-parlour when Miss Vernon joined them; all affected to be very sorry she came alone. During dinner very little passed except a few lamentations upon the cause of Mrs. Studeville's absence. “ Ah!

the Lord have mercy upon us ! when one comes to think of what might have happened," said Mr. Chambers, "I am sure 'tis enough to make a body's hair stand on end (he wore a wig) ; here the whole house might have been in mourning, instead of sitting down to so good a dinner, which, for one, I am sure I am not able to do honour to : and as for that there carter, why if I can but find him out, he shall find the odds on't yet, though my Lord Duke said he did not think he could help what happened at the time ; but I warrant me I would teach him to have all his eye-teeth about him in future."

Robert said, "I am sure Mrs. Studeville will be much to blame if she don't make use of her power upon the occasion. The fellow may be easily discovered ; and if I was her, he should see the inside of the house of correction ; a little hard labour would teach him respect for his betters."

Mrs. and Miss Chambers and Mr. Vernon spoke, in their turn, much to the same effect ; and thus the ball was kept up while the

the servants were present, in hopes what they said would be properly handed down among the household, and in time reach Mrs. Studeville's ears.

Miss Vernon had made it a rule from the moment she took up her abode at the Court, to hear, see, and say but little;—her independent fortune procured her general respect; and the Chambers family thought they could not pay her a greater compliment than by treating her as one of themselves. They soon found she never repeated what passed during the old lady's absence, and sometimes smiled when they joked, as Mr. Chambers called it, about the old maid; therefore, having grown bold by degrees, they soon flung off the mask in her presence, and never scrupled acknowledging their real views. The servants had scarcely left the room before the old man called out, "Well, Grace, how do you find yourself, girl? I hope you ha'nt got any bruises?"

"No, Sir, I am much obliged to you;

from being one of the uppermost, I escaped one of the best."

"Aye, true," said the old man with a grin; "three of you upon the old woman was tight work let me tell you; it was well she was not so full as I am now," laughing at his own wit.

Robert and James joined in his mirth; but Miss Rachel said, "La, papa, how you talk!"

"Ah! and Lord Miss Rachel," said her father, "I heard you lay upon your poor old namesake; she had a blessed time among you all. But, Grace, I say, how the devil is all this? you can let me into the rights of it if any one can; how came this here outlandish Duke to be the old woman's cousin? and how came he to be so damned handy? I have heard the old girl talk about some of the tribes coming over to England, from the Devil's A--se-a-Peak, when Adam was a little boy: pray is this one of the precious brood that was left behind?"

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These *shrewd* questions occasioned so much mirth among his own family, Miss Vernon could hardly have obtained a hearing had she attempted to answer him; but when the laughing began to abate, he renewed his discourse, "Some of these foreigners are deep dogs;—has not this one got hold of the old girl's story, and so come over with a design to make her believe they are related? or else to chouse the close old prude out of some of her fortune? His being a Duke is all of his side; and faith! I don't think she would dislike to be called our Grace, and my Lady Dutcheß, and so forth. And between ourselves, I should not wonder if this here spark was to be no better than a sharper after all."

"I should have thought the company his Grace was in would have prevented you from forming such a suspicion, Sir," said Miss Vernon; "but if I understand right, the Duke is a son of the Hon. Alfred St. Aubyn, of course grandson to the Earl of Melton."

You most probably have heard Mr. St. Aubyn married abroad?"

"Oh! zounds," said the draper, striking the table with his fist, "I begin to be up to the rig. Aye, aye, Grace, I heard of St. Aubyn's marriage sure enough, and have often had a hearty laugh with my Poor dear wife at the bustle it occasioned. Lord, Lord, how I did enjoy the surly old Peer's mortification, for he is a damned old rip, take my word for it. Yes, yes, it was the father of this very Duke was to have had old Rachel. Don't you remember my telling you all how and about it, Bob and Rachel; how the disappointment had like to have broke the old girl's heart? But she was tough, and weathered the gale, which may be fortunate for some people; for, take my word for it, she has added a fine round sum to the capital. But I say, Grace, is this said admirer of the old girl's living still? but, what's more to the purpose, is his French wife dead? for all our noses may be put out of joint at last; the old prude has got a colt's tooth in her head yet."

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"From what the Duke said himself, Sir," replied Miss Vernon, "I have every reason to believe Mr. St. Aubyn has paid the debt of Nature, therefore *we* may make ourselves very easy upon that score."

"So much the better, Grace, so much the better, child; I began to have my doubts whether Master Alfred had not sent his son over to bring matters round again; however, thank God for all things. I am heartily glad to hear he is hid in the ground. But, Grace, how comes this young chap to be a Duke? though I know half these outlandish titles are mere flim-flam; such Dukes are often as poor as rats. Besides, I never heard St. Aubyn made any great catch of it; I know I thought he was a fool at the time, for old Rachel would have been a warm one. But do you know why we are to bow, and scringe, and call this young puppy your Grace at every word?"

"I fancy he inherits his present title from his mother, Sir," said Miss Vernon; "but I speak merely at random;—nor can I satisfy

you respecting his fortune ; I only know as yet he bears an Italian title."

"Well, but what the devil brought him to England ? how came he to be at this Lord Fortrose's ?"

"You must have patience for the present, Sir, as it is utterly out of my power to satisfy your curiosity ; I have already acquainted you with all I know concerning the nobleman in question."

"Well, child, I am much obliged to you for what you have told us ; 'tis very natural to wish to know all one can in such a case as this ; for it would be devilish hard, after waiting such a number of years, to be choused out of one's own by a *Mounsbeer*. Come, James, I will give you a bumper toast, and do you all join in it, girls ;—Here's to this great man's speedy return."

"I have drank as much as I chuse, Sir," said Miss Vernon, while the old man was filling the glass ; "yet I have no objection, if it will oblige you, to drink his Grace's health and safe return."

"That

"That was not what I meant, Grace—I said speedy return; but never mind, you shall have it your own way."

"His own family and Mr. Vernon repeated his exact words; and Miss Rachel observed, "His Grace seems a favourite of Miss Vernon's already; who knows what may happen."

"Very true," replied Miss Vernon; "I think it is peculiarly fortunate you are engaged, else I am afraid mine would be a hopeless case."

"I would not marry a foreigner for all the world," said Miss Rachel; "to be dragged away God knows whither, and perhaps never see my relations and friends again! I should die at the very thoughts of such a thing."

"Oh! but if you was in love, my dear sister," said the bride, "you might be of another mind; though the Duke is a foreigner, he is a very handsome man; don't you think so, Miss Vernon?"

Poor

Poor Robert gave his better half a look that meant to have expressed his jealousy ; but she was utterly unconscious of having made him feel that baneful sentiment. Miss Vernon enjoyed his mortification, and seized the opportunity to say much more in the Duke's praise than she would otherwise have done, and with such effect, that Miss Rachel joined in her eulogiums, protesting she had never seen a man more to her taste, nor that looked more the gentleman, than his Grace. Both Mr. Chambers and his son were evidently enraged ; the former gave Miss Vernon a glance of disapprobation ; then, turning to his daughter, " I like to hear you talking about handsome men here, and handsome men there ; it's well Mr. Cary an't by ; I don't suppose he would approve of your flippancy any more than I do ; so please to keep your tongue between your teeth, Miss ; many things fall out between the cup and the lip."

" Lord ! Sir," said Miss Rachel, " sure a body may speak their thoughts ; pray what
did

did I say any more than my cousin we need be ashamed of?"

Miss Vernon with difficulty kept her countenance, while she supported her first opinion. The old man quite lost his temper, and could not help venting his spleen. "Well, damme if I don't think all women are naturally perverse; they are like a drove of pigs—if one goes wrong, the rest are sure to follow. None of you can see a failing in a great man. You are all ready to fling yourselves at the head of any titled fool. There was the old prude could smile at my Lord Duke, and simper and draw herself up as if butter would not melt in her mouth; and the moment he was gone, did not she begin to make long faces, and complain of her bruises? Aye, aye, old or young are all of the same kidney, an't they, James?" attempting to laugh to conceal his anger. "When you was a rich flashy buck, the women took more notice of you than they do now."

Mr. .

Mr. Vernon was not flattered by this remark ; and the draper, fearful he had gone too far with him and his sister, drank another glass to calm his spirits ; then continued, " But now, joking apart, among ourselves, how does the relationship stand between the Duke and the old girl above stairs ? Let me see (as the blind man said) old Rachel, my wife, who is now in heaven (for she was the best of the bunch) your mother, Grace, and her were three sisters." Miss Vernon, without noticing his polite reflection, bowed assent, and he proceeded. " Well, and as that old blackguard Lord Melton married their mother's sister, why he became their uncle, and his children their cousins, one of whom was this here Duke's father ; why then this great man must be second cousin to the old maid ; I am right, an't I, Bob ?" " Yes, Sir," was the answer. " Oh then it will do—all is as right as my leg ; we have nothing to fear from that quarter ; no, no, they can't marry according to

to the laws of Great Britain ; so the old girl can't play the fool if she would."

These wise discoveries and remarks occasioned another hearty laugh among the draper's family ; but as Miss Vernon did not join in their mirth, the old man said, "Why, Grace, you look serious ; I believe *you* began to be afraid this foreign spark might lick the gold off the gingerbread ; though I know you an't much in want of any thing Madam Rachel has got to leave behind her. But I say, does she cough of nights, girl ? I find she is plaguily touched in the wind. She could not eat any dinner, forsooth, after having seen the son of her faithless lover ! Lord, Lord, poor old soul !—But what was I going to say ? Oh ! I recollect ; aye, you don't know how this great man got acquainted with Lord Fortrose you say, Grace ? However, by his being at Neville House, 'tis a sure sign him and his proud old grandfather don't set their horses right."

"I am convinced, Sir," said Miss Vernon, "the Duke and Lord Melton are upon the

the most friendly terms. His Grace was the person who saved the Earl's life very lately. You probably saw the incident in some of the London papers?"

"Then the devil remember his love to him, say I. Yes, yes, I read the whole account, and said then what a damned pity the old fellow escaped being food for the fishes. I must drink confusion to that proud Peer, as I have done a thousand times before; it was him who set that pitiful Sir Yelverton the example to turn his own flesh and blood out of doors! But I always said, and so did my poor wife—God rest her soul! Why don't you say Amen, Bob? How do you expect to thrive in the world if you don't honour your father and mother?—But to return to what I was saying: That old scoundrel led that poor ninny Sir Yelverton by the nose: Lord bless you, he would turn him round his finger; it was him, no doubt, advised him to make that infernal will, by which we have all been such sufferers; but the devil will reward them both in time; he has got one, and if the other

other goes to heaven, I need not mind what I do. But now, boys and girls, mark my words—I have no interest in what I say or do; I only flummery the old maid over for your sakes; thank God I have enough to last me my life; but it is my duty to do what I can for my children and orphan relations; and I will always stick up for your rights. But, as I said, mark my words; this proud woman will never be easy till she gets this new-found cousin into the house, and then we may get him out again if we can; for she will be so taken up with his greatness, she won't care how soon we turn our backs upon her. But I came down for three weeks or a month holidays, and I don't mean to be disappointed; she shall say go, before I budge a foot till my time is expired. She has a mighty knack of saying, 'some folks can't take hints;' now I could tell her a different story between ourselves; there is an old saying, but a damned true one, 'there are none so blind as those who won't see, nor so deaf as those who won't hear.' But what was that letter

letter that came just in the very nick, and blew the secret Rachel told me?"

"It came from the Earl of Melton, Sir, and was written to inform my aunt who was in the neighbourhood."

"Oh, hó! then ten to one if we ha'nt that old curmudgeon amongst us before we leave the Court; I dare say I shan't be able to keep my temper with him, for I have long wished to tell him a bit of my mind;—then all the fat will be in the fire; the old woman will bounce like a parched pea, for nobody must contradict *my uncle the Earl*. We had enough of her quality binding before, I thought, and now we shall have my cousin the Duke added to the list; so what with my uncle the Earl, my cousin the Viscount, my Ladyship this, and the Hon. Miss t'other, damme she will drive us all mad. But what is the name of this fellow? Rachel said it was *Fur* something."

"Di Ferrara, Sir," said Miss Vernon.

"*Die for ever*, girl! poh, now you are joking;

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joking; spell it, girl, then I may be able to make head or tail of it."

"*Di*, Sir, answers to the French *de*, or in English *of*; and *Fer-ra-ra* is the name annexed to the title."

"Why then look ye, Grace, he may *die for ever and ever* if he chuses. However, we shall soon see how the cat jumps;—he is to dine here on Thursday, and what fine complimenting there will be between him and Mrs. Studeville! But pray which way did these young sparks come when they clawed you all out of the coach?"

"They came down the hill, I should presume, Sir," answered Miss Vernon, "as they took that road home; and the Duke said he had been admiring the situation of the Court."

"Oh! he had," said the draper, "been reconnoitring I will lay my life, and only waited for some favourable opportunity to shove his nose in. As the carter was going down the hill, they saw the old coach a coming, and tipped something into his hand to give

give it a hoist as he passed, and allowed him time to get away afterwards. The Duke said the fellow could not help it."

"You seem, Sir, to have formed a very favourable opinion of his Grace," said Miss Vernon.

"Why, look ye, child, I don't say he did bribe the fellow, though I think 'tis very likely. However, God forbid I should wrong any man! so we will say no more about the matter."

Miss Vernon had long sincerely despised Mr. Chambers; yet never had he shewn himself in such odious colours as during the foregoing conversation. His sordid views thus openly acknowledged, and his base insinuations respecting the Duke, changed her former contempt into a sentiment nearly amounting to aversion; and she hardly knew whether she ought not to put her aunt upon her guard against such a mercenary wretch. The constructions that might be put upon such a disclosure, and their near relationship, alone determined her to persevere in the line

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of conduct she had adopted ever since she had taken up her abode at the Court ; but finding it impossible to listen any longer to what might be almost termed scurrilous abuse of the person at whose expence they were eating and drinking, she rose from table, telling the company she would go and see how Mrs. Studeville did. " Why it may be as well, Grace," said Mr. Chambers ; " thank God these ancient walls are pure and thick ; nobody heard us laugh I hope ; so tell her we have been drinking to her speedy recovery, and all that. You are a great favourite, so any thing you say must go down ; and if she should grow frumpish as her consequence increases, tell her your mind at once ; you will always meet with a hearty welcome at Birchin-Lane."

The rest of the Chambers family joined in this *disinterested* invitation ; and Miss Vernon, having thanked them all for their politeness, without giving them reason to suppose she meant to take advantage of their offers, left the room. Mrs. Studeville had
risen

risen from her couch when she joined her, seemed very cheerful, and told Miss Vernon good-naturedly she had thought her long. Her head woman, Mrs. Tabitha Wilson, was with her when her niece entered, but was immediately dismissed. Their conversation naturally turned upon their accident and singular rencontre—"We have certainly, niece, been very fortunate upon the whole."

"Undoubtedly, Ma'am," said Miss Vernon, "the hedge probably broke our fall."

"A very just remark, niece; how few young men of the Duke di Ferrara's age and rank would have been equally polite to an old woman like me. Don't you think him a very fine figure?"

"I seldom have seen any gentleman unite so many exterior advantages, Ma'am."

"You are quite right, niece; as my uncle justly observes, one need not be told he is nobly born. His mother must have been a very fine woman I should suppose, though he is a very handsome likeness of his father."

The poor old lady's voice faltered as she concluded, and a sigh escaped her while she added, "Poor man! he was very unfortunate through life!" Had she expressed all her thoughts, she would have said, "we were both so." She put her hand in her pocket, and took out a small seal-skin case, which she opened, contemplating for some minutes a miniature picture it contained; she then held it to Miss Vernon; "look at that, Grace, and tell me whether you ever saw any body it resembled?"

Miss Vernon had but little doubt whose picture the case contained before she received it from Mrs. Studeville. Having examined it for some time, "I rather suppose, Ma'am, this was done for the Duke di Ferrara's father."

"It was, niece; don't you think as I do, that the Duke is a very handsome likeness of that picture?"

"His Grace's eyes being blue, and his hair infinitely lighter, gives rather a different expression of countenance, Ma'am, else the

resemblance is very discernible, though not absolutely striking."

"My own remarks exactly, niece; his Grace's eyes have infinitely more expression, and his fine auburn hair adds peculiar beauty to his countenance. Signora Mondovi was a fair woman, I presume?"

Miss Vernon, convinced this was a subject that could only revive disagreeable recollections in her aunt's mind, tried to wave it, and was successful in her endeavours; they drank their tea *tête-à-tête*, and supped the same, though Mrs. Studeville acknowledged she was well enough to have gone down; "But I am so sick of those Chambers's and their fulsome compliments," she went on, "I am glad of any excuse to keep out of their company."

Miss Vernon was at a loss what to say, which her aunt perceiving, said, "Don't suppose, niece, I include your brother in my censure; he is in many respects a very agreeable companion, but his imprudence has lowered him too much even in his own opinion."

nion. Servile humility can flatter none but very weak minds ; but as I rather think that part of his conduct, I am tempted to blame, arises from a latent wish to oblige, the motive must plead powerfully in his favour."

Miss Vernon was flattered by this kind distinction, and with a degree of mild benevolence, which formed a principal trait in her character, endeavoured to palliate what she would not have undertaken to defend. Her aunt listened with pleasure to these proofs of her affection for a brother she hardly thought deserving of such a sister ; and when she ceased speaking, said, " Believe me, Grace, if the Chambers family were not in the house, I should not exclude James from our society ; but I must behave with something like common decency to the vulgar beings now I have invited them. I can't think what possessed me when I afforded them such an opportunity to come to torment me ; and I am sure I hardly know how to set his Grace down with such company ;

pany ; he must think I have chosen a set of most agreeable inmates."

As his Grace will most likely learn from Lord Fortrose that they are part of your family, Ma'am, I am convinced he will attribute their being at the Court solely to that reason."

"I hope so, Grace ; but it is very mortifying even to acknowledge such a crew as relations. I sincerely wish this was the eve of their departure ; but there is no such thing as getting rid of them when once they are here. However, I don't think—I won't make any rash vows, niece, but I do believe I shall never invite them again ; and while they do stay, I will keep as much as possible in my own room, and hope you will bear me company, for the old fellow is sometimes unbearable ; I can't suppose he is aware of the strength of his expressions."

Having thus spent what the old lady called a very comfortable evening, Miss Vernon and she parted for the night ; and the latter went down stairs to set the minds
of

of the company in the parlour at ease respecting Mrs. Studeville's health, fearful their anxiety might else have broken their rest. She found them fully occupied in settling her affairs in case she had died without a will. It was therefore some time before they made any enquiries about her, and when they did, it was with as much indifference as they really felt. Mr. Chambers observed, from Miss Vernon's account, "The old girl would be allowed time enough, he foresaw, to make a will; she did not intend to die this bout—she knew a trick worth two of that;" then told Grace what they were disputing about when she came in; "I have been saying old women an't fond of making wills; James is sure Mrs. Studeville has one by her; now he would have been very handy, as I tell him, having a little smattering of the law, in case the old girl had been unprepared, and not allowed much time. But I suppose you know, Grace, whether she is provided if she should be taken at a *non plus*? For my own part, I shall be satisfied let it

be which way it will. But don't you think, Grace, all her property must have been divided equally among the heirs-general, (and God knows I wish for nothing more) if she had tipped off owing to this here overturn?"

"I am really no judge, Sir," said Miss Vernon; "it is a subject I have not as yet debated with my aunt."

"Zounds, girl, I never supposed you had; steer clear of that, Grace; old women don't like to be reminded of leaving a certainty for an uncertainty. However, as I said before, I only hope we shall all have share and share alike. I am far from being an interested man; my greatest enemies can't give me that character."

Miss Vernon, convinced of the *truth* of this latter assertion, wished them a good night; and after settling how each would dispose of what they deemed must necessarily fall to their share, the party in the saloon broke up their consultation, and retired to their respective apartments.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

NEXT morning, for the first time since the arrival of the Chambers family at the Court, Mrs. Studeville breakfasted in her dressing-room : her guests had all assembled earlier than usual, in hopes she would attribute their anxiety to enquire how she did to their sincere regard for her. When they understood she did not mean to favour them with her company during their repast, they rather hoped the shock she had sustained had been attended with more serious consequences than she was at first aware

of: however, rather before eleven the old lady appeared amongst them, leaning upon the arm of her favourite niece. She was immediately surrounded on all sides; each tried to express first their fears, then their joy, &c. and were still pouring forth a torrent of equally unmeaning and insincere compliments and congratulations, when the butler came in with two notes, which he presented to his mistress, saying, with the utmost deliberation, as if afraid of making any blunder, "The Duke *di Furafur's* gentleman brought these, Madam, and waits for an answer."

Mrs. Studeville's countenance brightened, and a pleasing smile succeeded a sort of disdainful smirk, excited by the gross absurd compliments she had been in a manner forced to listen to. She entreated in a sort of half-polite half-ironical tone, her guests would permit her to advance towards one of the windows; they instantly, as if they had been so many puppets obedient to her command, retreated with the most ludicrous precipi-

precipitation towards various parts of the room. She seated herself, opened the Duke's note, and began to read ; but as the character was small, and she had not again her spectacles about her, she desired Grace to read it to her. The spinster listened very attentively to the Duke's truly polite enquiries after her health ; the other ladies were also mentioned, and a hope expressed that they continued as well as when he took his leave the day before. The other note was from Lord Fortrose, who addressed her in his own, Mr. and Mrs. Neville's names, and though not so flattering to her vanity as the other, was still received as a compliment and mark of attention, and as such highly gratifying to her pride. Drawing herself up while she spoke, and casting a look of satisfaction around her, she said, " I must trouble you to be my secretary upon this occasion, my dear Grace ; you shall write, and I will dictate."

In a few minutes Miss Vernon began the arduous task ; but there were so many alter-

ations, so much scratching out and interlineations, owing to Mrs. Studeville's being out of the habit of writing, she observed, that it was some time before the rough copies were finished to her satisfaction. They were soon fairly transcribed, and placed in their respective covers, when a fresh difficulty arose, how ought the one to the Duke to be addressed. James Vernon, who during his prosperity had once taken a trip to Turin, ventured to say he thought "Illustrissimo Signor" ought to precede the name; but as his Grace was in many respects an Englishman, Mrs. Studeville said she should address him as such, and thus it was settled. The notes were then sealed with the Studeville arms, and examined by the old lady, who said they would do mighty well. The bell was rung, and they were delivered to the servant who made his appearance, with orders to give them to the messenger in waiting.

The company were once more at liberty to speak. Mr. Chambers, who had sat fidgeting upon his chair, and twisting his face

face into a variety of contortions, expressive of his displeasure and contempt for this outlandish fellow, the title by which he had dignified the Duke, now began to hem by way of clearing his articulation, and attracting attention ; but Mrs. Studeville at that very moment, having sent for her spectacles with the writing materials, put them on, and took up the Duke's note. Her eyes were no sooner upon the paper, than the draper, almost bursting with rage, looked at his dear Robert, and had he dared, would have exclaimed, "What a vain old cat!" However, he now began seriously to dread this, to all appearance, formidable rival, and determined, therefore, to use his own phrase, "to crop the rising sprig in the bud," convinced, we must suppose, his talents were perfectly equal to the undertaking.

Mrs. Studeville having perused both notes with infinite attention and increasing satisfaction, laid them down before her. "There is," she observed, "an elegance and purity in his Grace's stile, even in this short speci-

men of his epistolary talents, as striking as it is flattering to those he addresses."

Mr. Chambers lost all patience, and instantly interrupted her, "Why, Madam, don't you think an Englishman can write and talk his own language better than any foreigner upon the face of God's earth? to be sure these *Mounsheers* and *Senhores*, as James calls the Duke, may be able to flatter and wheedle, and coax, and so forth, with their *parla vous jabber*, but give me a true-born Briton; none of your mungrel breed for me, half one and half t'other. I like a man who always speaks his mind, and says what he thinks, without bowing and scringing, and such like grimace."

"Pray whom are you addressing, Mr. Chambers? said the old lady, affecting surprise; or what do you mean to say? I was seldom more at a loss to understand you."

"Why, Madam, all I meant to say is this, and that I will maintain, that this here outlandish Duke, after the kind reception he met with under your hospitable

roof, and polite invitation to repeat his visits—yes, Madam, after all that, which would not have gone for nothing with me I can tell you, I do say, and affirm it into the bargain, ought to have come over himself to have enquired after your health.”

This, as the draper thought, truly masterly harangue totally failed in its effect, owing perhaps to his not having sufficient command over his temper, which was but too visible while he was speaking. Mrs. Studeville, astonished at his petulance, instantly said, “Bless me, Mr. Chambers, you need not be so warm; and give me leave to tell you, I should have supposed the Duke di Ferrara’s superior rank, relationship to *me*, and, above all, his polite enquiries after the female part of your family, whom he found in my company, might have precluded him from your censure.”

Confounded, abashed, and wholly discomfited, the draper was very much at a loss what to answer; yet, convinced he had offended, was as anxious to excuse himself

as

as he had been to criticise the Duke, began to stammer out, " Really, Madam, you quite mistook my meaning ; I only spoke in a general way. You know, Madam, as I said, English gentlemen are renowned for their honour and politeness ; and I think it is most likely an English Duke would have called instead of writing ; at least I know it is what I should have done."

" I have no doubt, Sir," said the old lady with a sarcastic and truly mortifying laugh, whenever his Majesty is graciously pleased to create you a Peer, that your manners and conversation will do honour to your rank. The present race of ignorant nobility will then have an example worthy their imitation."

The old fellow endeavoured to conceal his spleen under a forced laugh, while he said, " Ah ! my dear Madam, that was a good hit ; but I vow if I had been at Lord Fortrose's, I should have mounted my horse, and galloped over before breakfast to see how you were ; now whether that would have been

been acting politely, you know best, Madam."

The draper paused to allow time for an answer. The old lady, smiling superciliously, opened the Duke's note once more, saying, in a milder tone, "I am certain, Mr. Chambers, had you attended while Miss Vernon read his Grace's complaisant letter, you would not have animadverted so forcibly upon his want of feeling; do me the favour to listen," beginning to read, "I should have done myself the pleasure of waiting upon you in person, had my impatience permitted me to defer my enquiries till a proper visiting hour." There, Sir, (taking off her spectacles to look at the draper with an air of triumph) for my part I can't perceive any impropriety his Grace has been guilty of in committing his enquiries to paper: and I must say the Duke has treated me, from the first moment of our meeting, with the utmost respect and most distinguished politeness; and, in my opinion, has all the dignity of manners and good breeding which a man of quality should

or

or can have, but which so few in this country really have. On Thursday I expect his Grace will honour me with his company to dinner, and I trust he will then, as upon every other occasion, meet with the utmost respect from every branch of the Studeville family."

"Most certainly, Madam," said Mr. Chambers; "God forbid that me or any of my children should offend his Grace; I am sure nothing was ever farther from our thoughts; we all know what is due to our betters. I dare say, Madam," he went on, "the Duke is immensely rich."

"When I am commissioned to investigate the amount of his Grace's income, I shall be better able to answer your question; at present, by way of enforcing my former request, I can only say he is the Earl of Melton's grandson, and my cousin."

Mrs. Studeville now retired with Miss Vernon; and the rest of the party took a stroll till it was time to dress for dinner. During the morning the wished-for letter from Lady Gowrie arrived, which put the old lady quite

quite *au fait* concerning the Duke's family history, and made her dispatch a second note to his Grace, to entreat he would bring the young Marquis with him on the Thursday. The Duke, in answer, politely promised, to her infinite joy, to comply with her request. Meanwhile she sent for her coach-maker, bespoke a new carriage, and agreed with the man to send her a chariot for immediate use, which at this juncture she preferred to a coach, as it so completely excluded her female guests from accompanying her in her usual airings. Her next care was to procure several elegant toys for her expected youthful visiter, with every dainty the season and county afforded, to regale his noble father. The draper was happy to find this hated rival had a house and home, which he learned from Miss Vernon, as it gave him hopes, he said, he would soon return to look after it; and though he thought Lady Gowrie shot with a damned long bow, he observed the fellow might not be so poor as he had suspected.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

ON the Thursday Grace presided at Mrs. Studeville's toilette, who, particularly wishing to appear to advantage in the Duke's eyes, spared no pains upon the occasion; and having completely tired the patience of her ancient Abigail, at last accompanied her niece into what was termed the best parlour, where the rest of her guests were already assembled, each dressed in the best clothes they had brought to the Court, which, owing to the recent wedding in the family, were remarkably shewy, not to say gaudy.

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The moment the door opened sufficiently for them to get sight of Mrs. Studeville, they arose, and affected to be lost in admiration at her elegant appearance. Mrs. and Miss Chambers began to exert their complimentary talents by praising the colour of her gown, beautiful lace cap, and handsome diamond earrings, &c. Young Vernon said he never saw any one become dress so much. The old lady smiled, which encouraged Robert to say, "Indeed, Madam, 'tis a great pity to let such handsome clothes lie by and spoil; bless me! if I was in your place, I would dress as much every day, and be abroad and amongst them."

There was a familiarity in this speech by no means suited to the old lady's taste; she turned from the speaker with disdain. The draper had reserved himself for the finishing stroke, and was determined to set all right again by his compliment, which he had been some time framing. He strutted up to Mrs. Studeville, looked boldly in her face, exclaiming, "Upon my soul, Madam, I did not

not know you again when you came into the room ; I will be shot if you don't look twenty years younger in that dress than when I saw you last, only five hours ago."

The draper swelled with self-approbation as he concluded, having never delivered himself more to the purpose, as he thought, or more distinctly ; but soon found he had not been more successful than his son, as not a muscle in her face stirred, merely answering him by a stiff inclination of the head, as she did not enjoy being reminded of growing old. She then seated herself near one of the windows, from whence she had a very good view of the entrance into the park ; and as she did not chuse to display her spectacles, she trusted to Miss Vernon for the first intimation of the expected guests' approach. Four o'clock was the appointed dinner hour, one later than usual—a compliment she would not have paid many of her acquaintance, which was one reason why she saw so little company. The great hall clock chimed the hour before they made their appearance.

Having

Having been in momentary expectation of them for the last quarter of an hour, the old lady began to fidget upon her chair, and look peevish. Mr. Vernon just observed, it was very likely the clocks at Neville House and those at the Court differed. Mrs Studeville gave him a look of approbation. Miss Rachel, therefore, presuming the remark pleased her, said, "Even half an hour soon slipped away if unexpected visitors had dropped in, which might have prevented the Duke and Mr. Neville from going to dress."

As the spinster took no notice of this observation, the old man shook his head at his daughter, and told her afterwards she had harped too long upon the old string. Robert said great folks were privileged people; they thought every body was at their beck and call, and that they did folks great honour if they remembered the invitations they had received. This was being what he called *tit for tat* with the old lady for her scornful look. The draper said, "Why pray where would be the difference else, Master Bobby,

Bobby, between great and small ? Perhaps if I was Duke *di Farie*, I might wish to shew my consequence ; it may be polite for aught I know ; for what's one man's meat is another man's poison is as true as the Gospel."

"La! papa," said Miss Rachel, "you did not speak the Duke's name right ; you must take care when he comes."

"Well, girl, I an't accustomed to these outlandish names ; I shall only have to say your Grace, and my Lord Duke ; I warrant me I can think of that. I knew what it was to speak to great folks before you was born ; and I know this, his Grace is too polite a nobleman to keep a lady of Mrs. Studeville's consequence waiting if he had understood her when she told him what time she dined. However, we are all liable, with the best intentions in the world, to make mistakes at times ; but I must say if my Lord Duke does mean to take liberties, why if I was in my honoured relation's place, I should shew him the odds of such behaviour."

The

The old lady had come to a resolution to let the whole party say and do whatever they pleased without taking the least notice, not chusing to enter the list of debate with any of them; she therefore, when she did speak, addressed herself either to Mr. or Miss Vernon, thus, in some respects, sending the rest of her guests to Coventry. The draper was infinitely more hurt than if she had quarrelled with him; this cutting indifference galled him to the very soul, and he would have continued to provoke her to answer him, if James, who had taken a favourable position that he might if possible be the first herald of agreeable tidings, had not called out, just as the clock was striking the quarter, "They are coming up the hill, Madam; I caught a glance of the postillions; I am sure it must be them."

Before he had done speaking, the Duke's postchaise and four was in sight. Mrs. Studeville rose with great solemnity, made Miss Vernon a sign to do the same, and now saw the carriage, followed by three out-
riders,

riders, advancing very fast. "Bless me! I must be quick," said she; come along niece; I wish to receive his Grace in the hall;" and away she hurried.

The rest of the party were very much at a loss what to do. Mr. Vernon, whom they all agreed understood etiquette better than themselves, assured them they ought to remain where they were: his Grace was Mrs. Studeville's, not their guest. Geoffry had placed himself upon the bottom step, that he might be ready to open the door of the carriage; but owing to its being a double step, and the second joint going rather stiff, he was not able to accomplish the task he had allotted himself. The Duke, therefore, jumped out—"That will do, my good friend." The old lady was within three paces of the door, and advanced to meet him. His Grace took her hand, which he politely raised to his lips, saying, "Your looks, my dear cousin, almost preclude the necessity of an enquiry after your health."

Such

Such a remark from the draper would not have given her a moment's pleasure; but uttered by the Duke di Ferrara, it became truly flattering, and a very gracious smile accompanied her welcome.

By this time Neville and Alfred were in the hall. Mrs. Studeville was excessively struck with the child's beauty, and the prodigious resemblance he bore to his father; repeatedly declared while she embraced him, she had never seen so charming a boy. She then courtesied to Mr. Neville, hoped he had left the Viscount and Mrs. Neville well; and having been answered in the affirmative, led the way into the saloon. The Duke was dressed as simply as a man of his rank could be for a dinner visit, and perfectly in the English fashion; Alfred, as any other child of his age would have been, whose parents, like the Duke, wished to preserve from that silly pride frequently instilled at that early age from fine clothes.

The Chambers family, determined to convince Mrs. Studeville how strictly they

obeyed her injunctions, bowed and courtesied with the greatest obsequiousness. The whole party was then introduced to the Duke and Mr. Neville in the following manner: "My niece, Miss Vernon, your Grace—her brother, Mr. Vernon—the Mr. Mrs. and Miss Chambers." The Duke bowed distinctly to Mr. and Miss Vernon, then addressed a more reserved general salute to the Chambers family.

So marked a distinction in the old lady's manner of introducing her guests, provoked the draper beyond measure; he was obliged to force a smile, though spite and vexation were but too legible on his countenance; and as he could not vent his internal rage upon the *proud old cat*, (the name he commonly honoured Mrs. Studeville with), he determined to let the Duke know how impolite he had been in keeping dinner waiting. Mrs. Studeville was talking to Alfred, of whom she grew every moment more enamoured, when the draper, giving his son a look which he perfectly understood, pulled out

out his watch, "Is it gone the half hour yet?" said Robert.

"No, it wants two minutes," was the answer.

This clever remark escaped even the notice of the Duke and Mrs. Studeville. Neville, who was addressing Miss Vernon, smiled significantly, while he said in a low voice, "How much Mr. Chambers ought to be obliged to the first people that brought watches into England."

"They are very useful things, Sir," replied Miss Vernon, "and often fill up a chasm in conversation."

"True, my dear Ma'am, and sometimes, as in the present case, are the means of conveying an indirect reproof."

As the Duke did not take a seat, no one else could; he was answering some of the numerous questions Mrs. Studeville was putting to his son, and in less than ten minutes Geoffry came in to summon them to table. "With your leave, Ma'am," said the Duke, addressing Mrs. Studeville, "I

will put that young gentleman under the care of one of my servants during dinner; he has dined, and will enjoy taking a run upon the lawn. Your great solicitude to see him induced me to comply with your polite request; but he is too young yet to be considered as part of the company any where."

"Certainly, it shall be as your Grace pleases; but I hope we shall enjoy my young favourite's company during the dessert? a little fruit can't hurt him."

The Duke bowed assent, and a servant was sent for to take charge of the young Marquis, the title he was distinguished by, though entitled to that of Duke di St. Severino, to avoid interference with that of his father.

Little passed of any moment during dinner. A service of gilt plate, not used three times since the death of Sir Yelverton, was displayed upon this occasion, and every dish was excellent of its kind. As soon as the dessert was brought in, Alfred was sent for,

and helped to every dainty it produced. The old lady then gave the Earl of Melton. Chambers inwardly cursed the proud Peer, yet, for the sake of the wine, drank his health in a bumper. Mrs. Studeville then said, turning to the Duke, "Your Grace has another son, my uncle informs me; pray how old is he?"

"Alfred is his senior by two years, Ma'am."

"About three years old, I presume, your Grace, as you did me the honour to inform me the Marquis had just entered his fifth year; pray what is his name?"

"Roger Theodosius, Ma'am," said the Duke.

"Indeed! your Grace," said the old lady, her eyes sparkling with delight; "why he bears the name of your great grandfather, and my grandfather Sir Roger de Courcy. I must drink his health; by what title is he distinguished?"

"That of Count di Mafferano, Ma'am."

The old lady instantly filled a bumper—

"Health and long life to the Count di Masferano!"

Old Chambers, conscious he could not pronounce the name properly, said, "I can't speak Italian, your Grace; so not to make any blunders, here is the young gentleman's health with all my soul."

The Duke smiled, and bowed to the draper; and the lady of the house, having drank a glass extraordinary out of compliment to her guests, rose to leave the room. The Duke rose at the same moment, to the no small mortification of old Chambers, who maintained good eating deserved good drinking, and he had not near had his *quantum sufficit* of the latter. Mrs. Studeville entreated she might not derange his Grace; but the Duke, smiling, said, "I am but half an Englishman at best you know, Ma'am, and quite an Italian with respect to drinking."

"I am happy to find your Grace takes such care of your health; I believe excesses in that respect are very dangerous in warm climates;

climates ; at all events I know they are much less frequent than in England."

Mr. Neville also rose and accompanied the ladies and his Grace into the saloon ; the other gentlemen stopped behind ; and the moment all was safe, as Mr. Chambers observed, he desired them to fill their glasses, setting them the example—" Here, my boys, is the devil fly away with all milk-sops."

They gobbled down their wine, and hastened after the rest of the company. Coffee was almost immediately brought in ; the draper cursed all such queer fashions in a whisper to Robert, but did not dare refuse taking a cup ; and soon after the Duke and Mr. Neville talked of returning home. Mrs. Studeville said she did not venture to press them to stay any later, as she presumed it would be the young Marquis's usual hour for retiring by the time they reached Neville House. However, she pressed his Grace so much to favour her with his company for a few days before he left that part of the country, and used so many persuasive arguments

to induce him to comply with her request, that, conscious he was in some respects rather a restraint upon Lord Fortrose and his son, who he knew had a very rich maternal relation in Devonshire, who wished very much to see the latter, (whom his being their guest prevented Mr. Neville from visiting), he therefore made the old lady truly happy by promising, in a gay tone, he would endeavour to obtain leave of absence from Lord Fortrose for a few days, in which case he would certainly comply with her friendly wishes. She was profuse in her expressions of gratitude; and having forced the most elegant of her new purchases upon Alfred, allowed them to depart.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

WITH that frank politeness which had early gained him the esteem of all his acquaintance, the Duke gave Lord Fortrose and his son his real reason for wishing to oblige Mrs. Studeville; and entreated they would permit him to spend a fortnight at the Court while they went into Devonshire; protesting he foresaw the Chambers family would afford him infinite amusement, as they were such striking contrasts to the mistress of the house: their vulgarity would often afford him an opportunity to give way to

his mirth at the expence of Mrs. Studeville, whose formality made him dread the idea of a *tête-à-tête* with her. She was now, against her will, forced to exert herself to keep her guests in what she called proper subjection; and as she did not want sense, he conceived a dispute between her and the draper must be highly entertaining.

Lord Fortrose, though very unwilling to part with his amiable guest, even for the above-mentioned period, felt himself infinitely obliged by this kind proposal, conscious of the generous motive from which it originated; he therefore reluctantly, as he observed, agreed to the Duke's arrangement, who, in consequence, rode over to the Court the following day, to inform Mrs. Studeville he meant, with her permission, to become her guest for a week or fortnight. She never received more welcome news; and as she seemed to think every minute an age till the Duke and his little Alfred were under her roof, his Grace promised to wait upon her the following Sunday; and finding his condescension,

descension, as she termed it, had afforded her an inexhaustible theme, he was not sorry when she suffered him to depart; but fearful the young Marquis might forget her, she sent him a box of very elegant little Dutch tumblers, which, she observed, his Grace's groom could put in his pocket.

Mrs. Studeville had received the Duke in her dressing-room; the Chambers family of course had not been present, but they had seen his Grace arrive and depart; and soon learned, with the most bitter regret, what had occasioned his visit.

As the old lady afforded them plenty of time to entertain each other, Mr. Chambers soon began to harangue his family to the following effect:—"Now, was not I right, boys and girls? (Mr. Vernon was present); was not I right when I said this here fellow would never be easy till he got his nose in amongst us? I dare say, for all what Grace said, he is as poor as Job, almost glad of a meal of victuals, perhaps, if one knew the truth of it; and this damned stinking snotty-nosed

brat too—I will be hanged, drawn, and quartered, if the *old cat* would have laid out half the money upon any of us, or ever will while she lives; (and pray God, her mouth was full of earth to-morrow!) she has already squandered away upon that shock-pated rude little urchin, and all, forsooth, because his name is Alfred, and he is grandson to her false lover! The Duke is no fool, though knave enough I will warrant me; and he means to take advantage of this silly old woman's folly; depend upon it he will try to make her provide for this boy, and the other too, whose name is no more Roger than mine is. I wonder, when the fellow was a cracking, he did not say at once it was Yelverton; but that would have been too barefaced, I suppose, he thought, and t'other tickled her fancy just as well. However, I had rather the chap should come now than if he had staid till we were gone; for it shall go hard if I don't give him a lift when he little thinks on't. Now mind me, James, let us stick to one another, and watch all his

his actions, and all his words, and if we can but catch him tripping, grinning at the old woman, or shewing any of his outlandish tricks, why let us all be down upon him; and egad, if we once get him out, he must be cunning indeed to get into favour again. However, at first we must be all humility and all complaisance: but, as I say, if we can but once set the old woman's back up, the business is done."

Having thus spoken his sentiments, and given his family and James proper instructions, he said no more; and on the day appointed the Duke and Alfred came to the Court. Lord Fortrose and Mr. Neville set out the same morning for Devonshire, having engaged his Grace to return to Neville House within three weeks at farthest.

The state bed-room had been prepared for his Grace; and Mrs. Studeville was at her heart's delight when she had got the Duke into her picture-gallery, as it afforded her so excellent an opportunity of expatiating upon the merit and bravery of her ancestors
to

to a man so capable of appreciating their merit. Sunday and Monday were taken up in walking over the house, and surveying the park and pleasure grounds; but Tuesday morning proved rainy, and of course confined the whole party to the house. The library was unfortunately much the worst furnished room in the house, as neither Sir Yelverton nor his daughter were remarkably fond of reading. The Duke, therefore, by way of passing the time, proposed billiards to the gentlemen; there was a very good table in a room fitted up for that purpose. Mr Vernon was the only one who understood the game, and readily agreed to the proposal: the other gentlemen said they would look on; and Robert asked James to give him a few lessons, as he had played once or twice the summer before at Margate, and liked it prodigiously. They went into the billiard-room, and the Duke and James began to play for half-crowns to interest them in the game. James was what might be called a very good player, but his antagonist

gonist handled a queue with far greater dexterity, and was, of course, infinitely his superior in point of skill. As the Duke merely wished to kill time, and lose a few half-crowns, he played with the utmost carelessness: Vernon, who had still a most abominable itch for gaming, was convinced in his own mind he could beat him with ease, and could scarcely conceal his triumph as his winnings increased. The draper and Robert were equally anxious to win a little of this outlandish fellow's money, and eagerly snapped at the bait upon the Duke's offering them a bet to interest them in what was going forward. The draper gave his son a knowing look, and winked at James, as much as to say it will do. James made them various encouraging signs till the old man said, "Dandle it for once; I will venture half-a-guinea, and you shall go my halves, Bob." The Duke closed with the proposal; and James, having won four half-crowns, offered to go double or quits, and was equally lucky from the Duke's declining

ing any exertion, not wishing to win his money. The draper whispered to Bob, "What a nice milch-cow this here foolish Duke would be for some of our gamesters: I wish we don't empty his purse if he goes on much longer."

James would now have ventured any sum; though, had he allowed himself time for reflection, he would have recollected the same sort of foolish vanity had led him on till it ended in his ruin, by making him the dupe of experienced professional gamesters, with whom he used to associate; but once more flushed with success, he proposed going on for half-guineas, and by this means soon won three guineas. The draper and his son, equally fortunate, had accumulated two and a half. The Duke, tired of play, pulled out his purse, and laid down the money. "Why you won't give it in yet sure, your Grace?" said the draper; "burn my old shoes, but if I was in your place, I would go double or quits. James, you ought to give his Grace two; I think you are the best player, and I don't

don't like to pocket money among friends and relations."

James declared he was very ready to do both if his Grace chose.

"I have no sort of objection to playing another game," said the Duke, "and for any sum, double or quits, and as much more as you like, Mr. Vernon; though I don't feel at all inclined to avail myself of your kind offer, as I have much too high an opinion of my own skill to accept the odds."

It would be difficult to determine which of his antagonists was most pleased. The game began; and James took as much pains as if his fortune depended upon every stroke he made. The Duke, by mere chance, they all supposed, got the first two; and the draper said, "There, now it is as I proposed; I will venture five guineas your Grace loses the game."

"Done," said the Duke.

Robert, saying he would go upon his own bottom for once, made the same proposal; which was equally accepted; and James protested

protested he would follow their example if his Grace was willing.

The Duke, now perfectly comprehending their generous design, replied, "I will readily oblige you all, gentlemen—five guineas round;" and thus it was settled.

Old Chambers winked at Vernon, who gave him to understand the money was secure. The game went on, and James got the next two. They with difficulty concealed their joy; the draper rubbed his hands, and whispered, "Bobby, the great man is in for fifteen yellow boys, besides his former losings, my lad." But the scene, to their inexpressible dismay, soon changed.

The Duke, as has been observed, was a most capital player (though from not being used to the table, which was smaller than those he had been accustomed to, and from not wishing to win James's money, who he knew could ill afford to lose it, he had hitherto been unsuccessful), could not resist the temptation he felt to punish these three mercenary beings, who so openly triumphed

in

in the idea of fleecing him of his money; he accordingly exerted himself, yet not sufficiently to damp all their hopes at first. The game went on quite regularly till they were seven each; James then made a bad stroke; "Zounds!" said the old man, "how you play!"

The Duke smiled at his passion. James's hand began to shake, and he never got another. The draper struck the table with his fist, and swore he could have played better himself. The Duke offered them their revenge, either then, or at any other time; but James's finances were not in a sufficient flourishing state to permit him to venture another five guineas; he was therefore obliged to decline the contest. The Duke took the money with the utmost *sang froid* and truly enjoyed the mortified looks of the draper and his son, though he determined James should not be a loser in the end.

As they now separated to dress, the draper took an opportunity to tell his son and
James,

James, that, by the God that made him, he believed the Duke was no better than he should be—a mere quality sharper, who had wheedled them on just to chouse them out of their money; and he would be sworn fifteen guineas were an object to him. However, he would take care he should not come over him with any more of his foreign tricks.

When they met at dinner, Mrs. Studenville was in excellent spirits, and, by way of encouraging her sober guest, drank an extraordinary glass of Madeira with him between the courses. The other gentlemen wanted something exhilarating after their unexpected losses, fearful the Duke would, as he had hitherto done, adjourn with the ladies, which obliged them to do the same, though by this means they were not allowed time to swallow half as much wine as they wished;—they drank strong beer in the room of mild ale, their usual beverage; during dinner, by way of making out in quality for the deficiency in quantity.

As

As soon as the cloth was removed, Alfred was as usual sent for, and various delicacies placed before him. Mrs. Studeville then asked the Duke for a lady, who, not wishing to give a foreigner, gave Miss St. Aubyn. He had foreseen what conjectures would arise; but, being prepared for the attack, returned her railery, though he let her understand his cousin, much as he said in her praise, would never be Duchefs di Ferrara.

When the old lady rose to leave the room, she protested, meaning to pay the Duke a very high compliment, that she would not stir if she took his Grace from table so soon; and entreated he would consider himself perfectly at home at the Court. The Duke said she did him honour; and wishing to avoid singularity, knowing it to be the custom of the country, remained with her other male visitors. Alfred left the room with Mrs. Studeville, who found some new play-thing for him every day.

As soon as they were gone, the Duke filled

filled his glass, saying, "I will give you the mistress of the house, gentlemen."

"With all my soul, your Grace," cried old Chambers; "now this is something like."

Each drank a bumper to her health, and had something to say in the good lady's praise. They then gave their toasts round, and the draper, now in high good humour, said, "Well, I was always fond of a jovial party from a boy; and do say there an't many things in this world to come up to a good bottle of wine; and faith! I never tasted better than I have met with here."

Though the Duke was by no means fond of drinking, yet, as he saw a great deal of company at Naples, and latterly all the English who either resided there, or visited it in the course of their travels, he had not unfrequently presided at what the draper would have termed very jovial parties; and it now struck him, owing to the quantity of strong beer they had drank at dinner, it would not be a very difficult matter to throw his com-

panions off their guard, and he longed to see them, if possible, in their real characters: those they now supported, he was convinced, were assumed to court Mrs. Studeville's favour; and he thought her remarks upon such an occasion would be truly original. They wanted but little encouragement to drink. The draper soon began to sing; challenged James to drink glass for glass with him for all the money he had left. James declined entering the lists with him, and the draper swore he could whistle such milkops tipsy; in short, was very soon quite in his element, to the no small diversion of the Duke, who continued plying them with wine, told various droll stories to prevent them from perceiving he seldom filled, and never emptied his glass, by which means they might be said to drink two glasses to his one. Old Chambers swore his Grace was a damned hearty fellow, and he loved a jolly soul to his heart; he then filled his glass till it ran over, saying, "Here goes to our better acquaintance, my Lord Duke."

"It

"It was Mr. Vernon's toast, Sir," said Robert.

"What is that to me, boy?" said the draper; "if I chuse to drink his Grace's health alone, I can drink his toast afterwards. Come, Jem, give us one of your mistresses. But now I reflect you live at the sign of the Case is Altered. Well, have a good heart, boy; when things are at the worst, they always mend."

"I will give you Lord Fortrose," said Vernon.

"Well, I dare say his Lordship is a very worthy gentleman, Jem, and I promise you I will do honour to him;" but there was not wine enough upon the table to fill the glasses. "Zounds! what out already!" said the draper; "that is a pity too."

"We have drank enough," said Vernon.

"Very true," said Robert; and Mrs. Studeville might take it amiss; for you know she is rather particular if we ordered more."

"I should

"I should not have minded," said the old man, "if my glass had but been full to do honour to Lord Fortrose."

"We won't pay his Lordship so bad a compliment," said the Duke, "as to drink his health in half glasses; my good cousin desired me to consider myself at home; I shall therefore act accordingly," getting up and ringing the bell.

"That is hearty, by Jove!" exclaimed the draper. "Never mind—the old girl told you to make free, your Grace; so we will all enjoy ourselves under your protection. Damme, who's afraid? who's afraid? Egad, if I did not think she would hear us, I would drink my Lord with three cheers."

"Why that might not be absolutely the thing in a lady's house," said the Duke, highly amused; "but I will be answerable for any thing that may be said about the wine."

"Then I am sure we have nothing to fear," said Robert.

“ True, Bob,” said his father; “ his Grace is cock of the walk; he may do what he pleases here.”

Geoffry soon made his appearance, and his Grace gave orders for two more bottles of Madeira. “ I believe one will be enough, your Grace,” said Robert.

“ Hold your fool’s tongue, boy,” said his father; “ don’t you know it is very ill-manneredly to contradict his Grace? If he had ordered a dozen, I should not have done such a thing.”

The wine was soon brought—“ That is right, my old boy,” said the draper; “ is it out of the old bin?”

Geoffry, who saw what was going forward, could not help smiling, while he replied, “ I hope you will find it to your liking, Sir.”

The Duke had just drank enough to put him in excellent spirits; he therefore started amusing subjects, and gave them toasts they could not refuse doing honour to, till they began to see double. The old draper, notwithstanding he had made more free than the

the young men, carried it off best in the long run. They were too eager after the wine at first to observe the Duke's precautions with respect to himself, and too blind at last; and after nearly emptying the two bottles, perceiving they were perfectly off their guard, not to say down right drunk, the Duke left them, and immediately joined the ladies, as perfectly sober as when they left him in the dining-room. His entrance was the signal for Miss Vernon to begin making tea, which was immediately handed about, and his Grace entered into conversation with Mrs. Studeville, who had been playing at domino with Alfred, to his infinite delight.

The other gentlemen had now formed a much more favourable opinion of the Duke. The old man pronounced him a damned hearty fellow, an excellent bottle companion, a chip of the old block, an Englishman in his heart. "Indeed boys, more or less, always take after the father," he observed, "if they turned out good for any thing." They were

all rather surprised he did not return, but soon began to think he had joined the ladies—in that case they must do the same; but the old man swore he would not be among those who were hanged for leaving their wine behind them; they therefore finished the remains of the two bottles, and then, swearing he was in excellent spirits, the draper once more proposed joining the *old cat* and the girls.

Tea was nearly over before they entered the saloon, but Mrs. Studeville did not think it necessary to make any apologies upon the occasion. The Duke had taken care to seat himself with his back to the door, fearful he should not be able to keep his countenance when they made their *entrée*. The draper led the way; Robert was close at his heels; Mr. Vernon was rather behind; the two former came immediately up to the tea-table, and Robert took his station at the back of his wife's chair, and began to pinch her cheek; then saying, "I think I will drink a dish of tea, my love;" drew a chair,

chair, and flumped himself down by her side, put his arm round her waist, chucked her under the chin, twitched her hair, with other silly anticks expressive of his great fondness. The draper placed himself to the left of Mrs. Studeville, and very near her; he had been watching the motions of his son, whom he had full in view, and at last caught the old lady's eyes upon him: he grinned, looked wondrous wise, and giving the spinster a pat upon the shoulder, said, with a drunken hiccup, "Aye, Madam, young kittens will play.—What a pity it is you never married!"

Fortunately for the Duke his son was standing between his knees; he caught him up as if in play, and by that means smothered his mirth, though he had the utmost difficulty to forbear laughing aloud, as he happened to have his eyes upon Mrs. Studeville, and saw her with a look, meant to strike terror into the rude offender, and the countenance of one of the furies, give a start of horror, while she exclaimed, in a voice

23 almost

almost inarticulate through rage, "Keep your distance I desire, Sir! What company do you think you have got into? Do you know you are at Studeville Court?"

The poor draper gave almost as sudden a start as the offended lady, and was instantly fixed upright in his chair, with his mouth wide open, while his countenance exhibited a vacant stare, being totally unconscious how such trifles could offend. Yet the looks of the company, as well as those of the ancient spinster, convinced him he had, according to his own observation, "overshot the mark." Willing to make all the atonement in his power, he shoved his chair back twice before he spoke, then, lowering his head, said, "I protest, Madam, I never meant to offend you in my life; though I am unfortunate enough to do so sometimes. But pray, Madam, say you forgive me; for upon my soul I thought there was no more harm in laying my hand in joke upon your shoulder, than if I had done the same to your old fat cook. Pray, Madam,

Madam, give me your hand. I never could bear malice from a child. My poor dear wife, your sister, Madam, who is dead and gone, more's the pity, used to say she liked to see me when I had got a drop in my head, I was always so merry." Another hiccup, and being obliged to make a catch at his chair to support himself, put a stop to his eloquence.

Miss Vernon was obliged to leave the room to have her laugh out, as she expected every moment to see him measure his length upon the floor. In a few seconds he recovered his speech sufficiently to assure the old lady, he had merely drank a glass too much of her excellent wine, only to prevent it from being lost.

Still, as Mrs. Studeville seemed by no means inclined to extend the olive-branch, the draper began to look quite serious. His daughter continued making him signs to hold his tongue; but as most people, when they are in liquor, fancy themselves wiser than at any other time, he made ano-

ther attempt to apologize, with as little success as before. Mr. Vernon, thinking to stand his friend by endeavouring to plead his cause, rose slowly, supporting himself by the back of his chair, and in this elegant posture thus began:—"Indeed, Madam, Mr. Chambers had no more intention to offend you by the freedom of his gestures, than—than—" He hesitated; found himself bewildered, and at last made shift to stutter out—"We have been drinking your health, Madam, twice over, and—and that is all—we have been doing, Madam." Thus concluded his able defence of the poor draper's conduct.

The Duke never was more at a loss where to look, and kept talking to Alfred that he might not seem to be attending to what was going forward; but an unfortunate remark of the child's forced him to bite his lips almost through, and even have recourse to his handkerchief:—Alfred, struck by James's *clear* delivery, and waving motions, enquired in a very low whisper,

per, "An't Mr. Vernon well, papa?—What makes him talk so oddly?" His Grace, who dared not trust his voice to answer the question (convinced he could not have kept his risible faculties in subjection much longer), was not sorry when the old lady, finding it utterly impossible to get over the shock her delicacy had sustained, rose from her chair with more than usual stateliness, and casting a look of ineffable contempt around her, said, "Will your Grace do me the honour to lend me the support of your arm?" The Duke instantly complied, and taking his son in the other hand, left the room with the highly offended Mrs. Studeville, who, the moment the door was between them and her other guests, told him she was inexpressibly shocked to think of having introduced his Grace to such society; she had never seen either the Mr. Chambers's or Mr. Vernon in liquor before, and should have thought his Grace's excellent example would have prevented them from giving way to such
odious

odious excesses during their stay in her house.

The Duke, conscious of being the ultimate cause of their present disgrace, thought it incumbent upon him to become their mediator, as it was very far from his intention to occasion a breach between them and the spinster: he therefore, with his wonted good humour, protested he ought to be included in her censure, freely acknowledging he had encouraged them to drink a few glasses extraordinary, which, from their having made rather too free with her excellent strong beer during dinner, had rather disordered their faculties.—“ You know, my dear cousin,” he continued, “ you left me master of the ceremonies; and in my own house I am accustomed (though positively a decided enemy to all excesses of conviviality) to encourage my guests, particularly when they happen to be English, to push the bottle about. You must excuse my having made use of the liberty you gave me, for I acted by those

those gentlemen as I should have done at home, therefore certainly participated in their error; nay, I hardly know whether the promoter does not deserve more blame than the perpetrator of mischief. But I throw myself wholly upon your mercy, in hopes you will kindly grant a general amnesty."

Mrs. Studeville replied with a smile, "He was much too good an advocate; however, since he seemed to wish it, she would take no farther notice of their, in her opinion, breach of decorum; adding, in a cheerful tone, "Had they drank no more than you, my young cousin, they would not have required the exertions of so eloquent a pleader. But I can't think of returning among them at present."

The Duke agreed they were not likely, in their present situation, to contribute to her entertainment. Miss Vernon was therefore sent for, and they spent the evening in the dressing-room. She was excessively pleased

pleased to find his Grace had so kindly excused her brother's inebriety, for, in her own opinion, she thought him infinitely the most to blame of the trio.

A little before the usual supper hour, Mrs. Wilson (for none of the male servants were ever permitted to enter the dressing-room) came to enquire whether Mrs. Studeville supped below? The old lady seemed undecided, till the Duke, anxious to set the minds of the unfortunate delinquents at ease, said, "With your permission, Madam, I will go down; I dare say the spirit of the wine your guests have drank, is pretty well evaporated by this time. If I don't return, may I hope you will favour them and me with your company at supper? Should their spirits still remain in *alto*, I should not wish to put it in their power, even unintentionally, to distress you by their boisterous mirth."

This kind proposal obviated every difficulty; and Mrs. Studeville promised to follow
low

low his Grace in a few minutes if he staid below. He therefore hastened down stairs, and found, as he had guessed, the serious fears they began to entertain had completely sobered the three gentlemen. They were quite dismayed when they saw his Grace enter alone; and each began to accuse him as the cause of their being so woefully overtaken. The Duke, not thinking it necessary to acknowledge the truth of their accusations, assured them he was perfectly unconscious of having deserved such reproaches from gentlemen who had acknowledged they had been partial from children to jovial parties. Though his taste did not coincide with their's in that respect, he had endeavoured to do the honours of Mrs. Studeville's cellar as he should have done his own, and could not say he found himself at all disordered when he left the dining-room. "No, no," said the draper; "and faith! if I had known your Grace could have stood it so well, I would not have attempted to
drink

drink with you. You are no milk-sop I find : damme, if we had gone on a little longer, you would have laid us all under the table."

From this clever speech the Duke began to suspect the old man's views had been similar to his own, which was literally the case, for he had chuckled at the very idea of making the Duke act the very same part he had performed with so little success himself. However his Grace assured them Mrs. Studeville, at his request, had promised to pass an act of oblivion; therefore advised them not to take any notice of what had passed during tea; and in a few minutes the old lady came down. The draper, notwithstanding what the Duke had said, advanced towards her, bowing very humbly; was beginning to make his excuses, which he had arranged as soon as he was sufficiently sober, but was not sorry to find himself interrupted almost immediately by Mrs. Studeville, who assured him his familiarity was entirely obliterated

literated from her memory. The old man's countenance brightened, Bobby simpered, and James bowed, as looking upon himself included in the general amnesty. The evening passed off much as usual; and soon after eleven the company retired for the night.

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